Commentary

Volume Sixty-eight, Number One, July 1979

Music:
From Avant-Garde to Pop
Samuel Lipman

Theater:
Freak Shows
Jack Richardson

Movies:
Woody Allen in the Limelight
Richard Grenier

Books:
Werner J. Dannhauser
Chaim Raphael
Henry M. Pachter
Murray Friedman
Elliott Abrams

The War Against Zimbabwe

Bayard Rustin

Misreading the Middle East
Elie Kedourie

Sociobiology & Its Critics
Charles Frankel

Living with Intermarriage
David Singer

An Exchange on Foreign Aid: P.T. Bauer, John O'Sullivan & Critics

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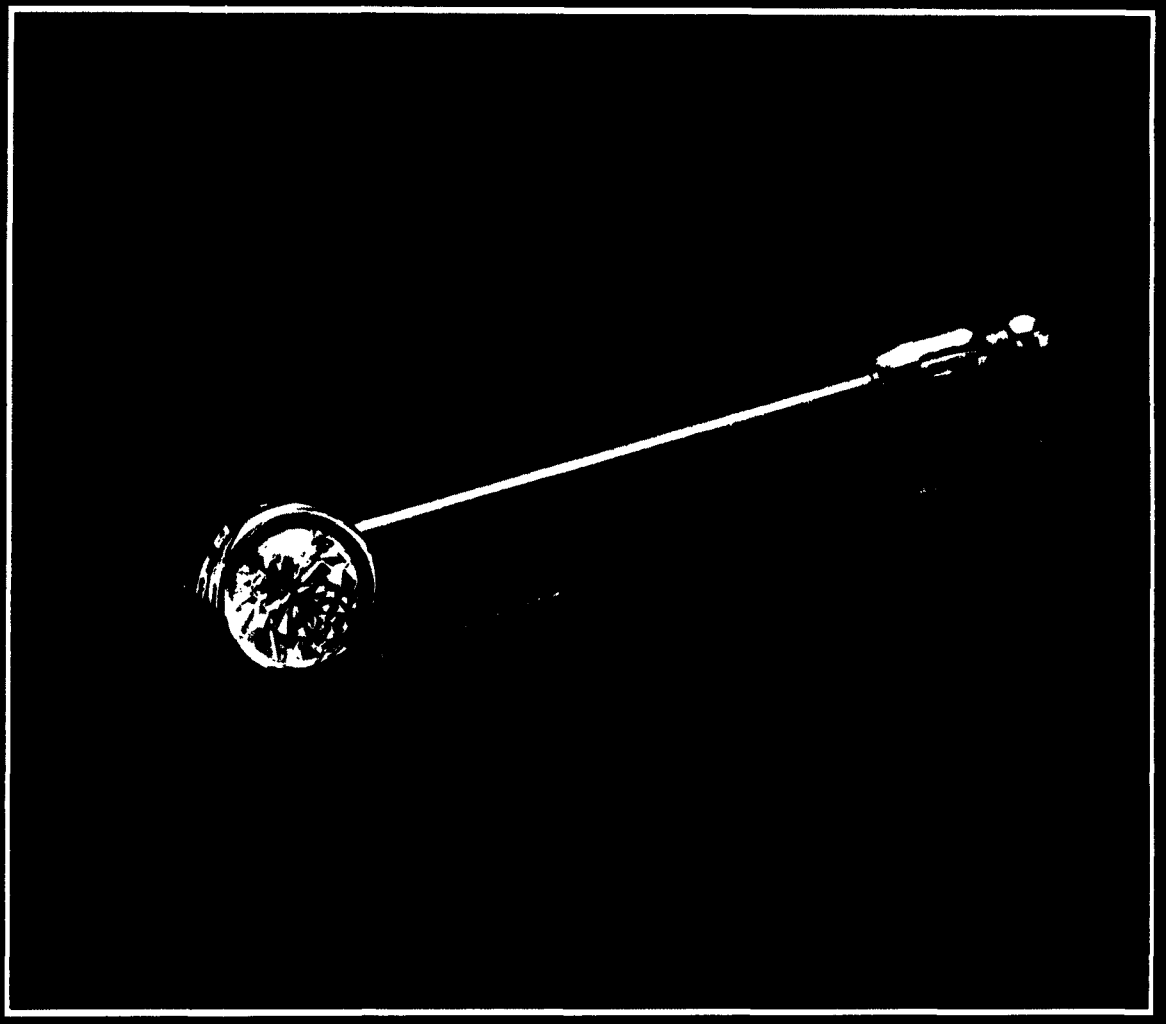

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Commentary

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Letters from Readers

Foreign Aid

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

"Foreign Aid for What?" by P.T. Bauer and John O'Sullivan [December 1978] contains some falsehoods, half-truths, ill-established assertions, logical and economic errors, and arguments which are legitimate when applied to parts of the aid question, but illegitimate when applied to the whole. One could challenge in detail a very large number of the points made. At the same time, there are elements of truth in much of what is said. Hence it is difficult to provide a succinct reply.

A major fallacy in the argument is using evidence for some aspects of aid (perhaps long since past, such as the groundnut scheme of the 1940's), as discrediting *all* aid. For example, it is true that some aid projects have been capital-intensive and wasteful; some aid benefits upper-income groups in poor countries and *may* in some cases come from taxes on poorer people in rich countries; sometimes the provision of aid acts as a disincentive to local efforts (as with some food aid in the 1960's); and so on. But while these assertions are true in certain cases, it has never been established that they are true in *most* cases; nor that reform of the distribution and administration of aid would not avoid the major mistakes. In general, the criticisms provide powerful support for such reform—which the main aid donors now take very seriously, as is shown by the move toward poverty-directed aid and basic needs in aid priorities.

Here we select, by way of illustration, twenty ill-established and false assertions. (The propositions in quotation marks are summaries of the authors' assertions.)

1. "In times of crisis, aid is the last item to be cut and the first to be restored." This is not consistent with the fall in aid as a proportion of GNP from 0.44 per cent in 1964 to 0.33 per cent in 1974 in the OECD countries, while in the same period the proportion of GNP accounted for by public expenditure rose markedly.

2. "Poverty is due to lack of effort and aptitude and therefore aid can be only a temporary palliative." The poverty in the world today is due to a mass of factors—much too complex to summarize in a sentence. Sociological, political, technological, and demographic factors combine with lack of resources in creating and maintaining poverty. A vicious circle of poverty, malnutrition, poor health, lack of education, low productivity, and lack of access to productive resources and to markets is a vital factor in many areas. "Effort" and "aptitude" are symptoms of this as much as causes. In this complex causal nexus, aid at best provides one of the factors conducive to development. Few would now claim that aid alone is sufficient to bring about development; rather, they would assert that when many changes are introduced (both in the internal and external environment)—changes which aid administrators may help to identify—aid may help in the process of development and of alleviating poverty.

3. "Because of attitudes, motivations, mores, and government policies, developing countries fail (and will continue to fail)." Yet domestic savings rates and growth rates in less-developed countries (LDC's) are, on the average, much higher than those in developed countries in the last century, and are nearly as high as in developed countries today, despite the big gap in income.

4. "Aid goes to governments, which it strengthens at the cost of local development efforts." On the whole it is true that aid goes through governments and to that extent strengthens them. But the power of governments in LDC's has many sources, of which economic aid is very subsidiary (military aid is much more significant in this respect). Moreover, some strong and powerful governments have been a powerful force behind successful economic growth (e.g., China, Brazil); in other cases, government regulations might have been an obstacle (clearly the article has in mind the India model). But aid is on the whole irrelevant to determining which type of government emerges in the recipient countries.

5. "Aid supports state planning." There is no evidence for this. Many heavily aided regimes encourage free enterprise and market forces; others have mixed economies. The centrally planned economies receive and give little aid. Indeed, radicals attack aid for supporting capitalist regimes and thus prevent-

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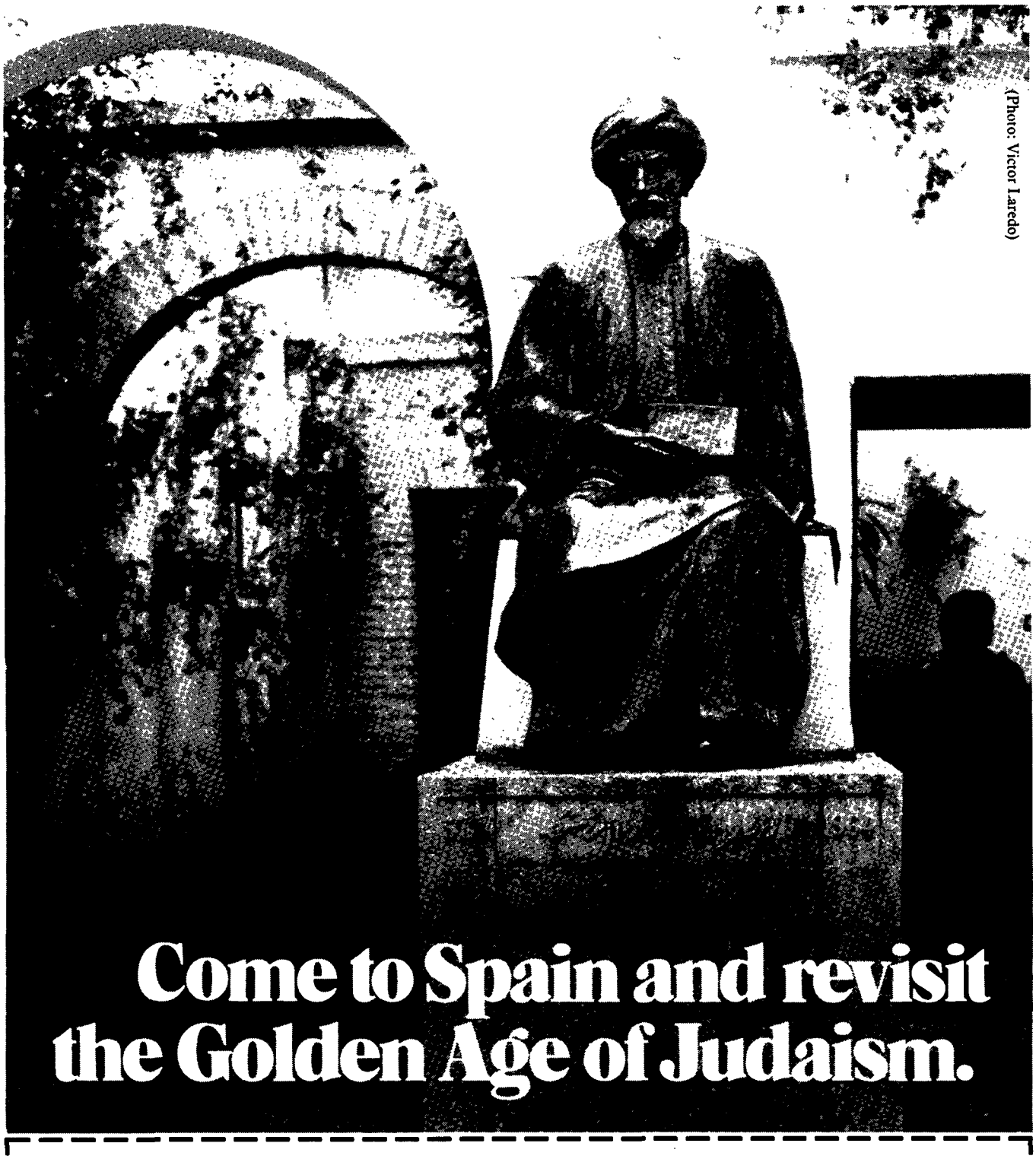

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ing or delaying the revolution that would initiate planning.

6. "Aid restricts the flow of private capital." The opposite is often true. Infrastructure projects facilitate the inflow of private capital. Hardly ever are aid projects in direct competition with private capital. Restrictions on private foreign investment are imposed by LDC's not because of aid but to avoid excessive repatriation of rents and monopoly profits and to acquire economic independence. Private foreign investment has been growing much faster than aid.

7. "Aid is bad for the balance of payments." Aid does *not* necessarily have a worse impact on the balance of payments than domestic welfare programs. Multilateral aid will earn a country *more* foreign exchange than it contributes if its share in the aid contribution is less than its share in extra export orders generated by the multilateral aid. Even bilateral aid, in the case of the U.S. usually tied to U.S. procurement, has normally no greater balance-of-payments impact than most other types of expenditure, and often less.

If we assume that developing countries spend all their additional foreign-exchange receipts—and do not use them to accumulate international reserves—then all the aid receipts must eventually find their way back to the aid donors—as a group—in the form of export orders. If the LDC's use part of the extra foreign exchange to reduce their external debt or accumulate international reserves, this directly or indirectly supports the currencies of the aid donors, which are normally held as international reserves.

8. "Present developed societies did without aid." Present developed societies had no aid, but (a) had *de facto, ex post facto* soft loans, because many defaulted on their commercial loans; (b) grew much more slowly and took much longer to develop; (c) did not suffer from the detrimental impact of the industrialized countries in the form of brain drain, protectionism, synthetic substitutes for primary exports, inappropriate technologies, etc.; (d) had populations growing at less than 1 per cent instead of today's 2-3 per cent; (e) were able to send their excess population to unsettled areas, whereas today mass migration is severely restricted. Aid is not indispensable for development, but it may accelerate it, improve its impact, and compensate for some of the detrimental impact of the rich on the poor. (See also point 13 below.)

9. "Not charging interest makes for inefficient use of capital." This argument is invalid, for governments can lend to local development-finance companies interest-free, but these can on-lend to local firms at full interest, if economy in the use of capital is desired and if the projects are suitable. The rates at which governments lend to other governments can be divided from the rates at which domestic borrowers borrow. For some projects the full benefits do not accrue to the borrowers, so that full interest should not be charged. While the grant element of aid has (in our view rightly) been rising, there is also a role for "hard" aid: i.e., aid at near market rates of interest which enables poor countries to borrow more easily because some of the risk is carried by the developed country.

10. "Aid leads to inefficient industries." While there clearly have been failures, many projects condemned by people like Messrs. Bauer and O'Sullivan as too capital-intensive and high-cost are now turning out to be spectacular successes, like some Indian and Brazilian industrial projects.

11. "Difficulty in servicing loans indicates waste of capital." This is not true, because (a) the benefits may be widely dispersed; (b) servicing difficulties may arise from transferring across the exchanges, which is also a function of the *lender's* protectionism; (c) difficulties may be due to budgetary problems, even though the projects are successful. In the aggregate, the LDC's have a good record of servicing loans.

12. "Aid for poverty is different from aid for development." It has been shown conclusively that the attitudes and responses of poor farmers do *not* differ from those of the farmers of developed countries. If given remunerative prices, credit, fertilizer, etc., they *do* respond to incentives, wish to improve their lot, earn more, etc. There is no conflict between reducing the poverty of those constrained by lack of resources and accelerating development. The tale of the idle native is a myth. There may be some conflicts of *timing* between aid which goes to immediate alleviation of poverty and aid which goes to growth-promoting projects where the effects on poverty reduction are further in the future; these conflicts have often been exaggerated because much aid which raises the consumption standards of the very poor also raises their productivity. But insofar as there are conflicts, this does not discredit either type of aid (as Messrs. Bauer and O'Sullivan imply), but rather poses problems for aid allocation.

13. "Colonialism was a benefit to the colonies. Western contact makes for development." If you consider Indonesia, India, China, and Japan, the order or the degree and length of their colonization and contact with the West is the reverse of their success in developing. The country with the greatest degree of contact with the West is Indonesia, where the Dutch were present for 300 years. Next comes India, where the British gradually expanded their footholds; then China, where trade along the coast created enclaves from which trade with the interior was forced onto the country; last, Japan, where the Tokugawa enforced a policy of no contact with the West except through a small Dutch trading group. Yet Japan started to grow first and made rapid progress; China is well on the way; India comes next; and Indonesia last. This does not account for the fact that some non-colonies have remained poor, but it disproves the point that contact with the West is always helpful for development.

14. "Aid is given for restitution and to purge guilt." This is a red herring. The basic argument is not guilt, but (a) developing countries need it and can use it; (b) developed countries can help; it follows (c) that they should. Franklin Roosevelt said in justification of American aid to Britain that when your neighbor's house is burning and you have a hose, you put out the fire without asking whose property it is. (You do not have to have started the fire.) Nonetheless, Western technology and other factors have contributed to problems, including, notably, the population problem.

15. "Aid does not serve the narrow national self-interest of donors." This is true. The basis should be enlightened, long-term interest in a prosperous and peaceful world community.

16. "Aid discourages effort." This is reminiscent of the Victorian argument that support of the poor weakens their moral fiber. They

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take to drink and gambling. First, as already argued, internal on-lending can be, if desired, subject to the hard criteria of interest rates. Secondly, aid channeled to make the poor more productive increases the *means* to improve their lot. There is no evidence that there is a conflict between *means* and *incentives*. It is characteristic that Messrs. Bauer and O'Sullivan have to hark back to 1947 for the groundnut scheme to find an illustration of a failed aid project!

17. "The Third World is neither united nor uniform." While there are important differences and even conflicts within the Third World, there are also clearly common elements. To say that there is only solidarity or only conflict is equally oversimplified.

18. "The most indigent groups are never mentioned in the literature." The whole basic-needs approach is concerned precisely with these deprived groups. Many aid projects can be shown to have directly and indirectly benefited these groups. There is no evidence that only politicians, civil servants, and academics are beneficiaries, though aid, like the London School of Economics and COMMENTARY, does require administrators.

19. "In restriction schemes to raise commodity prices only poor suppliers restrict." While this is a possibility to guard against, in the rubber scheme in Malaysia the big and rich plantations restricted while the poor and small rubber growers benefited from higher prices and unrestricted supplies.

20. "Aid takes money from the poor in rich countries and gives it to the rich in poor countries." This is the kind of often-repeated half-truth that is particularly galling to those who know the other half. No institutional transfers are perfect: the same goes for family allowances, transfer to welfare families, local government grants, federal taxes and state grants, etc. Any transfer from rich to poor is carried out in a leaky bucket, in which some leakages flow back to the rich. The question is how much, and how can one reduce the leakage?

The most powerful argument for aid—and the one that Messrs. Bauer and O'Sullivan are furthest from refuting—is this: there are vast areas of poverty where people's life expectancy is under forty years; where one-third to one-half of the children die before they are five; where one-third of the population is undernourished. In Mali, annual per-capita expenditure on health is $5-6; this is to be compared with an annual per-capita expenditure of nearly $600 in the U.S. A shift of $5 from the U.S. to Mali would double expenditure in Mali, while scarcely affecting U.S. levels. Aid is justified if it contributes to the well-being of those who are destitute in the world—either directly, by bringing them education, medicine, safe water, and food, or indirectly, by providing them with the means and knowledge to provide these things for themselves. That much aid is not of this type—but pays, for example, for modern hospitals for elites—is not a reason for stopping aid but for reforming it.

FRANCES STEWART
PAUL P. STREETEN
The World Bank
Washington, D.C.

P. T. BAUER and JOHN O'SULLIVAN write:

We are accused by Frances Stewart and Paul P. Streeten of falsehoods, half-truths, ill-established assertions, and logical and economic errors. This rather emphatic indictment is based upon summaries of our views, some of which are accurate, some distorted, some only distantly related to what we wrote, and some, indeed, the exact opposite of what we wrote. Some passages, in quotation marks, purporting to summarize our position, are in fact arguments of aid advocates noted by us only to be refuted. This underlines the dangers of what is anyway an unscholarly and misleading practice, namely, presenting summaries of our supposed views in quotation marks when our words are not in fact being quoted.

Our critics "select by way of illustration, twenty ill-established and false assertions." We will show that, on the contrary, it is their assertions about our position which are ill-established or false.

We begin with their point 3, which is one example of a purported summary that is in effect the opposite of what we wrote: "Because of attitudes, motivations, mores, and government policies, developing countries fail (and will continue to fail)." So far from saying that "developing countries fail (and will continue to fail)," we wrote that "large areas of what are now LDC's also progressed rapidly long before foreign aid." Our argument was that some peoples display attitudes uncongenial to economic development (as, for instance, objection to paid work by women), and that many Third World governments pursue policies that obstruct it (as, for instance, the persecution of economically productive groups like the East African Asians).

Where such factors inhibit economic advance, we wrote, the provision of free or subsidized capital will not promote development. We also wrote that "if the conditions for development other than capital are present, the capital required will either be generated locally or be available commercially from abroad" (thereby making aid unnecessary). This is confirmed by Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten in their comments on the historically high rates of savings and growth in LDC's. But they ignore an important reason for high LDC growth rates, namely, the existence of the developed world, which provides vast external markets, an abundant supply of skills, technology, and commercial capital.

In their opening remarks, Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten seem to accept some of our most important criticisms (e.g., that aid is often a disincentive to local development efforts) as true for some aid programs and as a good reason for them to be sensibly reformed. But they go on to argue that "it has never been established that they are true in most cases." This is a "major fallacy" in our case.

To answer that, we are forced to digress briefly into methodology. Not even aid organizations can spend billions of dollars without achieving any good whatsoever in specific instances. But how do we assess the *overall* effects of aid? Implicit in our critics' argument is the idea that this should be done by examining individually the costs and benefits of each and every aid program or at least "most" aid programs. But even if this herculean and clearly impractical method showed that 100 per cent of specific aid projects yielded a positive contribution, this would be far from conclusive because a multiplicity of such programs brings about general effects which may be adverse and might outweigh the total of specific benefits. To overlook this is indeed a "major fallacy"—to wit, the fallacy of composition.

Nor can we infer the net effect of aid from statistics. Aid's contribution to development must be small in relation to the various errors

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Pushing a String

A gardener trying to make the grass grow taller in the sparse patches on his lawn by cutting it shorter somewhere else might fairly be told that he doesn't know much about grass. Yet governments, in their persistent effort to control the distribution of credit in American society, repeatedly employ precisely the same method and with equally bad results. The danger of these exercises is that while no lawn is ever improved in this way, its healthy portions may be easily and severely damaged.

All governments, ancient and modern, have at one time or another been seized by an urge to use some form of credit allocation to make credit appear at a time or place where it would not otherwise go.

The problems with political credit allocation are intrinsic to the credit process itself. Credit exists because some people are willing to pay for the use of other people's money, and those others are willing to lend their money because they like to collect rent, in the form of interest, on property for which they have no immediate use. In the market thus created, each participant vigorously pursues his or her own self-interest; lenders, savers, and investors-consumers all try to achieve the highest possible return on their money, after taking due account of the risks, while borrowers strive with equally strong desire to minimize their interest costs. Efforts to allocate credit by government fiat come into conflict with these very human but relentless forces, and so governmental machinery for the allocation of credit never works.

This history of failure has not deterred the Government of the United States from trying repeatedly over the past fifty years to control the flow of credit by specific efforts to favor some borrowers and lenders while penalizing others. By recent count, these sporadic efforts have left us with some 150 laws and major regulations telling us what we may and may not do with our money. The restrictions most frequently encountered by the average citizen are those that limit the interest he can collect on his savings account, and that forbid him to be paid anything at all for the money he keeps in his checking account. Most regulations produce their effects more subtly and less directly, but the effects are pervasive and no one escapes their operation.

History is not lacking in examples from the past. Ever since mercantilism replaced feudalism the temptation to regulate labor, land and money has been irresistible. On May 6, 1795, the justices of Berkshire, England, met at Speenhamland. They set forth a scale of wage subsidies tied to the price of bread, so that a minimum income would be assured to workingmen irrespective of their wages. It was a time of great social distress in England, and the Speenhamland scales were intended as emergency measures. In

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short order, the subsidies spread through most of the country.

"No measure was ever more universally popular," according to the late Dr. Karl Polanyi. "Parents were free of the care of their children, and children no more dependent upon parents; employers would reduce wages at will and laborers were safe from hunger whether they were busy or slack; humanitarians applauded the measure as an act of mercy even though not of justice and the selfish gladly consoled themselves with the thought that though it was merciful at least it was not liberal."

In the long run the result was disastrous. Wage subsidies, paid from public funds, removed the floor from wage levels, which sank steadily until poor relief was preferable to working. The Speenhamland law was repealed in 1834.

There are many parallels in today's society to Speenhamland's attempt to push a string, well intentioned and potentially disastrous to all concerned.

Most citizens are unaware of the provisions of the Credit Control Act of 1969. This singular piece of legislation empowers the federal government to determine which citizens of the United States may borrow money, from whom, and how they are allowed to spend it. Not generally, but specifically and in detail. It arms the President with sweeping authority to license all lenders, register all loans, prohibit credit for purposes deemed inappropriate, prescribe maximum amounts of loans, establish maximum rates of interest, minimum down payments on purchases, and conditions for the repayment of loans. The government has never yet invoked these standby powers. But they are there, and others are now proposed.

The credit allocator's quandary is that, in the final analysis, he cannot hope to control anything unless he controls everything. If mortgage credit is cheap enough, the home owner can enlarge his mortgage and spend the money for anything he chooses, including the purchase of scarce commodities. Or a person can borrow on his or her life insurance at low interest rates set by law, thereby reducing the pool of funds that the insurance company has to invest in bonds and mortgages. To the committed allocationist the final solution is obvious: he must not only control the way our citizens lend or borrow money, but he must also control the way they spend it. And so on and on to price controls and the disasters of Speenhamland all over again.

There may be policy makers who believe this to be in the national interest, but it is doubtful that many citizens will find it to be in theirs.

* * *

A fuller discussion of this topic can be found in Credit Allocation: An Exercise in the Futility of Controls. *Copies of this Citibank study are available from Citicorp, Public Affairs Department, 399 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10043.*

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and biases of national income statistics. (For those who like that sort of thing, however, the statistics show a weak correlation between amounts of aid received and growth performance, as the Pearson Commission admitted.) And, in general, we cannot isolate the effect of aid from the many helpful and adverse, economic and non-economic, influences on development, all operating with different and varying time lags.

So, to assess the overall effects of aid on development, one has to examine general considerations which affect aid, supported by specific empirical instances. On this basis, we argued that any marginal contribution to development was likely to be outweighed by a whole host of social, political, and economic repercussions it set in train, such as Indira Gandhi's manipulation of economic controls for political purposes (an example we gave that is more recent than the groundnut scheme). Thus any presumption about the effects of aid must be that they are adverse. We said that this was confirmed by the plight of many aid recipients after many years of aid, and especially by their difficulties in servicing soft loans. Later in this reply we shall make clear why any positive contribution of aid to development must be negligible.

SO MUCH for methodology. We turn next to the revealing mis-summary in our critics' point 19: " 'In restriction schemes to raise commodity prices, only poor suppliers restrict.' While this is a possibility to guard against, in the rubber scheme in Maylasia, the big and rich plantations restricted while the poor and small rubber growers benefited from high prices and unrestricted supplies."

Here the ostensible summary seriously misrepresents our argument which was that, in order to raise commodity prices, output has to be restrained "by excluding potential producers who are generally much poorer than those who benefit." This is so for the obvious reason that, otherwise, additional supplies come onto the market and prices cannot be permanently raised.

But that is not all. Under the two rubber-restriction schemes in Malaya, now Malaysia, mentioned by our critics, production by small holders was severely restricted and the expansion of their capacity also curtailed drastically. However, the first of these schemes, the Stevenson scheme, operated in Malaya only and did not cover Netherlands India, now Indonesia. As a result of increased prices, the unrestricted producers in Indonesia, both estates and small holders, rapidly expanded their output and capacity, increased their market shares at Malaya's expense, and thus destroyed the Stevenson scheme. Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten have got the story exactly the wrong way around. For the small holders who "benefited from higher prices and unrestricted supplies" were not those under the scheme in Malaya, but those in Netherlands India who benefited because they were outside the scheme.

We will not here discuss whether Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten are guilty of falsehood, half-truth, ill-established assertion, logical and economic error, or "ignorance, Madam, sheer ignorance." But it is illuminating that the Stevenson scheme is the recognized textbook example of a commodity scheme with incomplete coverage, familiar to all who know about the operation of commodity schemes, and that Mr. Streeten's publications include *The Teaching of Development Economics*. He is also, or at times has been, special adviser to the World Bank; Deputy Director General of Economic Planning, United Kingdom Ministry of Overseas Development; expert adviser of the House of Commons Select Committee on Overseas Aid; holder of senior academic posts in major universities; and a close collaborator of Nobel Laureate Gunnar Myrdal.

LET us now examine our critics' remaining specific points.

POINT 1. They question that "aid is the last item to be cut and the first to be restored." How is this consistent, they ask, with the fall in aid as a proportion of GNP in OECD countries at a time when public expenditure as a proportion of the GNP rose sharply? But these trends can be perfectly consistent if the composition of public expenditure changes. And it would be a remarkable feat of myopia to overlook the vast changes in the composition of public expenditure in Western centers, including the United States and the United Kingdom, in recent years. For instance, while United Kingdom expenditure on overseas aid rose sharply from £247.5 million in 1971 to £392.5 million in 1975, it declined as a percentage of GNP from 0.41 to 0.38; and as a proportion of the United Kingdom government budget, it declined from 1.25 per cent to 0.89 per cent.

Our argument is borne out by the recent political fortunes of British aid. In July 1976, the British government cut state spending programs by £1 billion, including cuts in education, regional aid, local authority mortgages, and nationalized industry capital expenditure. Yet aid was not reduced; indeed, a substantial increase was announced a few months later; and this against a background of great public concern over government spending. Only when another budget reducing government expenditure had to be introduced in December 1976 was the aid budget reduced by £50 million for each of the two following years. But by October 1977, £20 million of those cuts was restored. And in January 1978, it was announced that the prospective aid budget from 1979 to 1981-82 would be increased by 6 per cent a year in real terms.

At present British aid is slightly less than £1,000 million a year—equal to approximately one-eighth of the swollen government deficit, or to 10 per cent of state old-age pensions. At the time of writing (April 1979), an election campaign is in progress in which public expenditure cuts are a major issue. Foreign aid, however, has not been mentioned by politicians in this context. Again, when the U.S. current-account deficit was a major cause of the dollar's weakness, various official bodies, including OECD, pressed the U.S. government to expand aid, although in 1978 it equaled about one-half of the deficit. All of which demonstrates that aid occupies a privileged position in politics and state spending.

POINT 2. It is not our view that "poverty is due to lack of effort and aptitude." Material backwardness is the initial condition of all societies from which some have emerged sooner and to a greater extent than others. In this sense, poverty does not have to be explained. What requires explanation is the emergence from poverty, *viz.*, economic development. With that qualification, we agree with Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten that "sociological, political, technological, and demographic factors combine with lack

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of resources in . . . maintaining poverty." (Indeed, this formulation is close to our own view that "economic achievement depends principally on people's attitudes, motivations, mores, and government policies.") That being so, how can the inflow of cheap capital alone markedly alter economic prospects? It remedies only the lack of some resources; the sociological, political, technological, and demographic obstacles to development remain, and indeed some are reinforced. (Incidentally, lack of money *is* poverty —not the cause of poverty.)

Our critics resuscitate the notion that poverty by itself is self-perpetuating—i.e., that a low level of income makes it practically impossible to emerge from poverty. If this were so, countless individuals and societies could not have risen from poverty to prosperity without outside assistance—as many have in fact done both in the Third World and the West. Within the same countries and facing identical physical and financial constraints, some groups have prospered, others managed much less well, still others remained abjectly poor (e.g., Turks and Greeks in Cyprus; Chinese, Indians, and Malays in Southeast Asia; aborigines in many countries). And the relatively prosperous were often subject to special disabilities imposed on them by the state. Do not "effort and aptitude" (and mores, motivations, etc.) have something to do with this?

Even if there were such a vicious circle of poverty, it could not be broken by aid. Aid cannot contribute significantly to development. Although often large compared to other economic magnitudes in both donor and recipient countries, it is usually a small fraction of the national income of aid recipients, especially in large aid-recipient countries—e.g., about 0.3 per cent of Nigeria's GNP, 1.5 per cent of India's, and 3 per cent of Indonesia's. Its contribution to the growth of national income is bound to be extremely small, as at best it cannot exceed the difference between the cost of commercially available capital and that of aid, applied to the percentage of national income represented by aid.

And, of course, the inflow of aid sets up damaging political and economic repercussions which are harmful to development. We discussed some of these at length in our article. We should also have noted certain adverse monetary results. An inflow of free or subsidized capital tends to raise the exchange rate, to support overvalued exchange rates, and to increase the domestic money supply. By increasing export prices and reducing the cost of imports, it damages the international competitive position of the recipients.

Of course, such adverse financial effects would be offset if aid were to increase the real productivity of resources as commercial capital *must* do if investors are not to lose their money. But such an offsetting effect is most unlikely, since aid is not linked directly to productivity as commercial capital is normally. And the direct effect of the inflow of outside capital, *ceteris paribus,* is to reduce local interest rates and thus, to that extent, to retard local productive saving. If, as seems likely, local savings are better adjusted than aid to market factors and local conditions generally, then aid may actually reduce the average productivity of investment. Altogether, even though aid alleviates immediate shortages, it cannot do very much for the development of the recipients.

POINT 4. Our critics accept that aid strengthens the power of LDC governments over their societies but say that some strong governments have promoted economic growth. They cite China, apparently the People's Republic rather than Taiwan. Yet the latter's massive economic advance is familiar and much more impressive. It is of some interest that 17 million Taiwanese, lightly governed by comparison, export more in value each year than their 800 million compatriots on the mainland. Deng Xiaoping's recent comments on the damaging economic consequences of Mao's "strong and powerful government," moreover, illustrate and support our own argument that the politicization of society (which, as our critics agree, aid tends to promote) obstructs economic growth, especially the rise in general living standards, in pursuit of other more political objectives. It would require the talents of a Lewis Carroll to do justice to the lumping together of China and Brazil. What it principally illustrates is that governments pursuing wholly unrelated or even diametrically opposed policies can be honored with the adjectives "strong and powerful"—thus robbing them of any substantive meaning in relation to economic policy. Humpty Dumpty had something to say about this.

Our critics ignore the many economically and politically damaging consequences of the politicization which we listed—notably the diverting of able and ambitious people from economic activity to politics and public administration and the exacerbation of political tension and conflict. Such adverse repercussions can be brought about by amounts of aid which, though small relative to the recipient's GNP, are large compared to, say, government revenues, or the size of the exchange economy, or imports and exports.

POINT 5. Having admitted that aid strengthens governments, our critics object that there is "no evidence" for the view that aid supports state planning. This is swallowing the camel of empirical evidence and straining at the gnat of tautology. If aid places more resources in the hands of recipient governments, then it necessarily strengthens their ability to control and regulate the economy. Indeed, Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten earlier concede this in the case of India. In addition, aid-giving agencies have often insisted on recipient countries drawing up development plans. Whatever the character of the recipient economy—whether market-oriented, mixed, or centrally-planned—such a plan usually represents a move in the direction of greater state control.

Nor is it irrelevant that the most prominent aid administrators and advocates (W. W. Rostow, M. F. Millikan, Gunnar Myrdal, John P. Lewis, and others) have insisted that government planning is an indispensable or even (in the words of John P. Lewis, when serving as director of USAID in India) "the one" condition for development. Such views are unlikely to be ignored by donor or recipient governments—especially since the latter's personal and political power tends to be increased by their acceptance.

POINT 6. We pointed to an obvious anomaly—that most aid recipients restrict foreign private investment while demanding aid because of a shortage of capital. If aid were not available, at least some governments would find this more difficult. It is in this sense that aid encourages and facilitates such restrictions—restrictions which, inciden-

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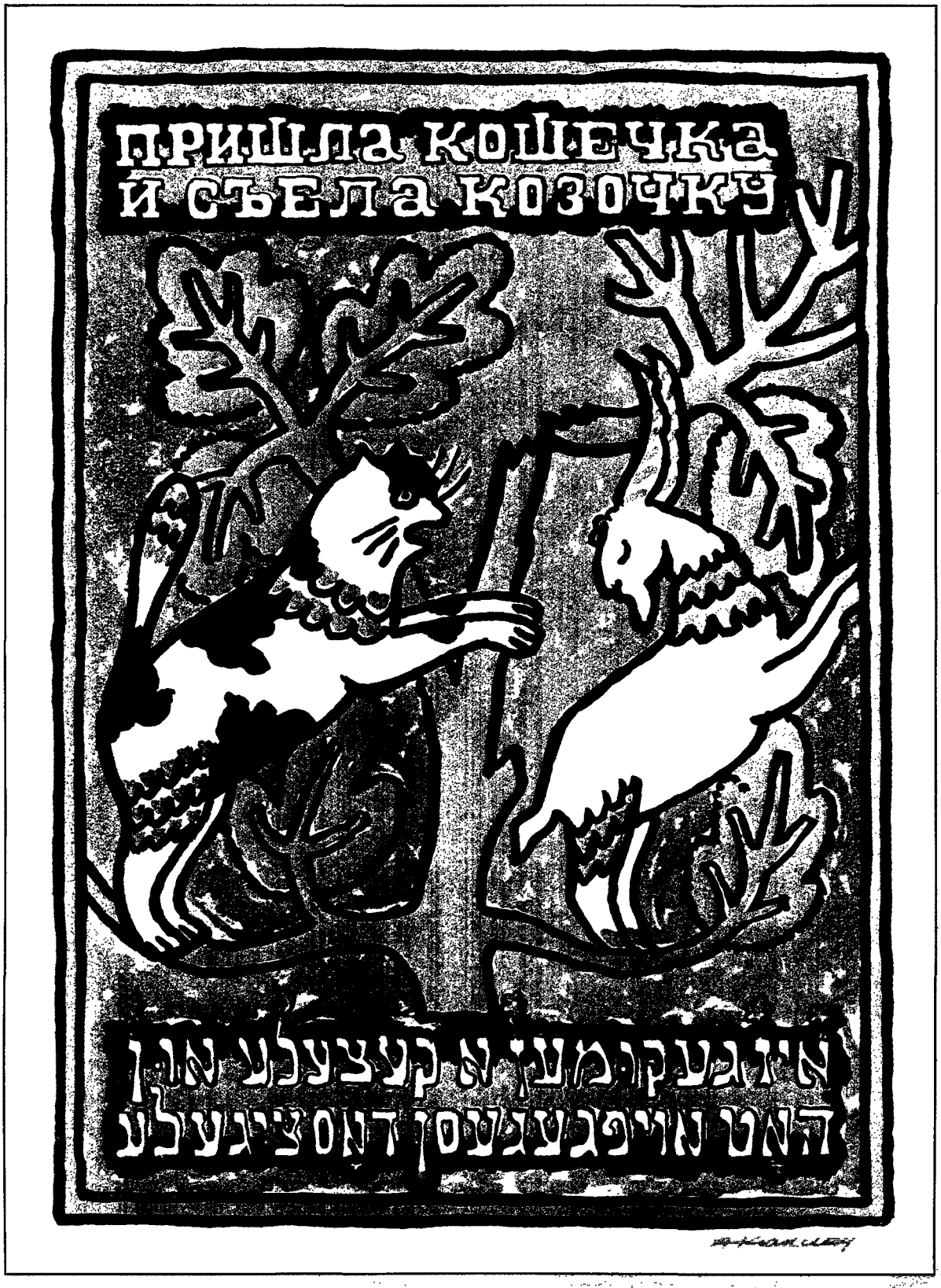

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The Cat and the Kid by Anatoly Kaplan

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tally, are imposed by many Third World rulers in order to strengthen their grip over their subjects.

Our critics argue that aid-financed infrastructure projects, for which private capital would not be forthcoming, actually facilitate its inflow. Infrastructure is, of course, a vague term usually signifying ports, railways, and roads which promote general economic activity, but sometimes expanded in meaning to cover any project of which the writer approves but cannot justify as profitable. Yet, in fact, governments can borrow (and, until recently, have borrowed) commercially at home and abroad for infrastructure projects, subsequently servicing the loans from the higher tax revenues that result from improved economic activity. And, again until recently, much of the infrastructure in LDC's was financed and operated privately—witness the British financing of utilities in the Americas.

It is just possible that restrictions on the *outflow* of private capital might be justified in order to restrict what our critics call the "excessive repatriation of rents and monopoly profits"—though as used here "excessive" and "monopoly" are mere terms of abuse. But how can such considerations justify restriction on its *inflow*? As for their point that restrictions are imposed to "acquire economic independence," this is surely a perverse justification for relying on aid provided by foreign taxpayers.

POINT 7. Let us look at some of the implications of our critics' argument that aid does not damage the balance of payments of the donors. If one donor country obtains more foreign exchange from extra exports than it contributes under multilateral aid (their own example), then another donor country must correspondingly earn less foreign exchange than it contributes. Multilateral aid, on this argument, implies the redistribution of funds among developed countries administered by the governments of LDC's. If the balance of payments of Lilliput benefits from this, then the balance of payments of Blefuscu suffers correspondingly.

What, secondly, are the conditions in which "aid does *not* necessarily have a worse impact on the balance of payments than domestic welfare programs"? Since 100 per cent of monetary aid goes across exchanges, the recipients of domestic welfare would need to spend 100 per cent of what they receive on imports for this to be true. "Tied" bilateral aid, of course, is partly an industrial subsidy to domestic producers in donor countries. As such, it has no direct effect on the balance of payments. But the cost to the donor country is the economic value of the goods and services thereby given away—many of which have an import content.

On some of the arguments of our critics, the donor countries could give away 100 per cent of their national incomes with no discernible effect on their joint balance of payments.

POINT 8. Our critics concede that the developed world progressed without aid. Their attempts to explain this away, however, are invalid and occasionally comic. (a) How can the progress of all developed countries be explained by some of them defaulting on commercial loans from citizens in others? And, in fact, loan defaults played no significant part in the development of the West and Japan. Indeed, those countries prospered most where people were known to honor their obligations, partly because this high commercial morality was reflected in the low cost of capital.

If we add their points (b) and (c) together, our critics seem to be arguing that the Third World suffers from far more substantial obstacles to development than historically faced the West and yet is developing at a much faster rate. Compare the two situations. Western protectionism (to which we are opposed) limits the extent to which LDC's can benefit from the vast and profitable markets in the developed world. But the benefits and opportunities are still enormously greater than those which were offered by the meager, confined, and specialized markets open to the West in its developing phase. Our critics mention "inappropriate technology." Are they seriously contending that the total effect of Western technology is harmful to LDC's, which would therefore be better off if they had available to them the level of technological development of, say, England in 1600? If so, that choice is always open to LDC governments. Some of them, for instance the Burmese government, have made great strides in that direction.

In short, Western societies progressed in conditions far more discouraging than those facing the Third World which, as we have already pointed out, can draw on huge external markets, an abundant supply of capital, and on a vast range of technology and skills unavailable before.

Under (d) and (e), Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten argue that the Third World's economic development is obstructed by rapid population growth and an excess population which cannot be exported via emigration. But rapid population growth represents a fall in mortality, which is an improvement, since people prefer to live longer. Moreover, the very fact that more people are born and survive indicates, to quote Macaulay again, that people "are better fed, better clothed, better attended in sickness."

Secondly, prosperity and development are not determined by the land/population ratio. Some of the most populous LDC's are also the most prosperous—witness Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan—whereas some of the poorest groups in the Third World live in largely empty areas, even where the land is not infertile, e.g., Sumatra, Borneo, much of Africa and Latin America. Again, an abundant supply of labor, such as high population growth insures, offers countervailing opportunities for economic development. One of the explanations of postwar European growth is that labor has been imported from poorer countries and augmented from domestic agricultural labor reserves.

And, finally, when talented and enterprising people do emigrate from the Third World—and emigrants tend to be such people in any event—this is stigmatized by our critics as the "brain drain"! So Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten regard both emigration and the lack of it as obstacles to development which justify aid.

POINT 9. A likelihood is not refuted by the citing of an opposite which is merely a possibility. Governments could on-lend cheap aid funds at market rates of interest to local industries. But if external capital is supplied *gratis* or on heavily subsidized terms, this encourages or even pushes Third World governments to undertake or support capital-intensive methods inappropriate to local conditions. The well-documented, extremely damaging effects (especially on the rural

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poor) of this have been extensively discussed in the serious development literature, notably by Professor Hla Myint. They are a major theme of *Why Poor People Stay Poor* by Michael Lipton, a close collaborator of Mr. Streeten's. And they lie behind the recent change of emphasis in aid advocacy and policy from encouraging industrialization to assisting the rural poor.

Well-intentioned though this change of emphasis may be, it nonetheless faces overwhelming practical difficulties, some of which were candidly admitted by the British government's White Paper, *More Help for the Poorest*: "Such a policy might also be frustrated if the recipient government was able to offset it by switching its own resources from one sector to another. . . . There would still be the difficulty of an official outside donor being able without local cooperation to specify enough individual projects where the benefits of aid would in fact go largely to the poorest group."

Insuring that aid really does benefit the poorest groups, then, is far from easy. Not only would the donors have to administer the allocation of aid funds directly to prevent the funds from being wastefully employed on politically-motivated or capital-intensive projects; to prevent offsetting expenditure, they would logically also have to supervise the recipient government's taxation and public spending. But the more donors shrink from such interference with the recipients' sovereignty ("neocolonialism"?), the less aid will benefit the poorest groups.

POINT 10. Does aid lead to inefficient industries? Again, it would require perverse ingenuity to spend billions of dollars without establishing some viable projects. Yet, as our critics concede, there have been many failures. And when they claim "spectacular successes," they cite projects which for a long time absorbed large amounts of capital and considerable subsidies. What is the criterion of success here? Is it that a project should eventually show an *operating* profit after large amounts of capital and accumulating interest have been ignored or written off? That method of accounting would sanctify the waste of scarce capital and compel our critics to hail, say, the Concorde as a "spectacular success" if it ever shows an operating profit.

We cited the groundnut scheme as a familiar, well-documented, and extreme case of the inefficiency of aid. But other examples abound throughout the Third World. Nor do our critics contest (to be fair, they do not even mention) our argument that aid leads to far-reaching economic inefficiency through political and social tensions and misdirection of people's energies, which we specified at length.

All of this accords with what one might expect. The allocation of resources, including aid, by LDC governments is bound to be influenced by political rather than purely economic considerations; the interests of the governing elite and its close allies; a reluctance to abandon inefficient projects which would amount to a damaging admission of failure; and job preservation. This is made worse because aid is not expected to yield a commercial return and is therefore not adjusted to market factors. The fortunes of the local bureaucracy administering aid depend less on the productive use of the funds supplied than on the amount of spending they administer and on its *political* results. Do Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten consider that spending by aid recipients like Taraki, Amin, Bokassa, Mengistu, Mobutu, Nyerere, and others is governed principally by concern for economic productivity or for the poor? If not, then aid need not be deployed productively and we would argue that it is usually not so deployed.

POINT 11. It is clear that, as a general maxim, difficulty in servicing loans indicates waste of capital. We can, of course, envisage exceptions or extenuating circumstances such as the subsequent effects of a natural catastrophe or a foreign invasion. But, as it happens, the arguments denying the maxim advanced by Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten are not even valid under this secondary heading as exceptions.

(a) If "the benefits are widely dispersed" (i.e., if the capital has increased the country's income and taxable capacity), then the recipient government should be able to service its obligations, especially soft loans. On the other hand, a government that is unable to collect taxes is most unlikely to be able to insure the productive use of capital.

(b) If a recipient government finds it difficult to service a loan which has been productively employed, because of balance-of-payments problems, this must be rooted in its inflationary financial policies (possibly aggravated by restrictions on the inflow of foreign capital). Protectionist policies (to which, let us again stress, we are opposed) by the lenders are a red herring here. As we argued above, Western markets offer immense opportunites to LDC's, even when hedged about with tariffs and quotas—witness the success of Taiwan, Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore, and others. Secondly, many countries which have defaulted on loans (e.g., Ghana) are primary producers facing no restrictions. And, finally, protection would be a factor that excused failure to service a debt only if the tariff or quota restricting the exports financed by that loan were imposed during the course of the loan project. Of how many defaults is that true?

(c) To say that a loan project has been successful but cannot be serviced because of "budgetary problems" is to pass a very severe censure on the government concerned. It must presumably be overspending its income, failing to collect taxes, mismanaging its external payments, or wasting capital on other projects. And if the government could repay but preferred to spend its money differently, that too would reflect attitudes uncongenial to economic development.

So the real or alleged difficulties of many aid recipients to meet their obligations strongly suggest that the subsidized capital supplied to them has supported the incompetent or the dishonest. Our critics claim that, in the aggregate, LDC's have a good record of servicing loans. But the countries which have defaulted in recent years include Ghana, Indonesia, Argentina, Brazil, Indonesia, India, Peru, and Turkey. By what standard, then, is the record of LDC's "good"? And if the issue is of little importance, as a "good record of servicing loans" would imply, why is debt cancellation a major Third World demand? In 1978 Britain alone cancelled £1 billion of Third World debt. And COMMENTARY readers may recall the cancellation of over $2 billion worth of rupee debt (counterpart funds involving no transfers across the exchanges) signed by Senator Moynihan when Ambassador to India.

POINT 12. Our critics argue that "the attitudes and responses of poor farm-

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ers do *not* differ from those of the farmers of developed countries." But we never disputed that Third World producers respond to prices and economic incentives. Indeed, that they do so has been a major theme of the writings of one of us for decades. Such responses, however, always take place within people's different value systems. A Hindu peasant will shift, even may have to shift, from one crop to another in accordance with changing prices and costs; but he will not normally slaughter cows in response to higher beef prices.

None of this affects, let alone refutes, our arguments that development and poverty differ radically as justifications for aid, that these justifications shift in accordance with the vagaries of intellectual fashion, and that, within the same society, the poorest groups are unlikely to possess the aptitudes and motivations that promote economic development to the same extent as the better off.

POINT 13. If Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten were entirely correct in their ranking of the economic progress of Japan, China, India, and Indonesia in inverse relation to their length of contact with the West, this would not at all disprove our argument that colonialism on balance benefited Third World colonies economically and that Western contacts generally encourage development. For we made it amply clear that domestic factors are the primary determinants of economic growth and that external contacts, though helpful, are neither the sole, nor a decisive, economic influence.

But we stand abashed and half-admiring at the breezy confidence with which they make such assertions as "China is well on the way" and "India comes next." Where are the solid foundations of well-attested national income statistics and the testimonies of foreigners able to visit all parts of these countries unshepherded which might justify such sweeping comparisons?

Coupled with this is the familiar practice of doubtful aggregation. In all the countries cited, the most economically advanced regions (as far as we can judge) are those with the most external contacts—e.g., East Sumatra in Indonesia, the Bombay area in India, the Shanghai region in China (and, since 1949, Taiwan and Hong Kong). All this is not surprising because external economic contacts extend people's economic opportunities and choices in production, consumption, and marketing. To deny that this benefits them is to treat them as children who don't know what is good for them. Our critics imply this at one point when they write that trade was "forced" onto people in the interior of China. Of course, people cannot be forced to buy or sell (except by government fiat or in conditions of slavery); and if the Chinese population at large had not wanted these economic contacts, they would not have been sustained for long. It was the Chinese government which was forced to lift its prohibition on trade. But this confusion of political rulers and the population at large is rife in development literature.

POINT 15. We are glad that Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten agree that aid does not serve the narrow national self-interest of donors and look forward to reading their criticism of the many aid advocates who repeatedly justify aid on such grounds (usually when talking to their electorates). The basis for aid, say our critics, should be "enlightened, long-term interest in a prosperous and peaceful world community." Well, quite so, quite so. But we gave substantial reasons why aid would not promote these universally desired objectives.

POINT 16. We are told by Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten that the argument that "aid discourages effort" is reminiscent of the Victorian argument that helping the poor weakens their moral fiber. An argument is not refuted, however, by being labeled Victorian. Nor does their "summary" quite convey our arguments—which were that aid promoted and instilled certain habits and attitudes uncongenial to economic advance (e.g., that one's economic fortunes depend on others—foreigners, the government, the rich, etc.) and that it enabled LDC governments to pursue policies that directly reduced incomes and obstructed development (e.g., persecuting economically productive groups). Indeed, a policy of

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gifts to governments based on the criterion of the poverty of their subjects encourages policies of impoverishment.

If our critics want a more recent instance of pauperization brought about by aid than the 1947 groundnut scheme, they need hark back only to the Washington *Post* of July 27, 1978. This gave a graphic and detailed account of the large-scale pauperization which U.S. aid had achieved in the trust territory of Micronesia: "Many people have abandoned productive economic activity, such as agriculture and fishing on a large scale, as they can live comfortably on the handouts provided by the U.S. administration."

Pauperization might, of course, be mitigated or avoided if the donors attempted (like the Victorian pioneers of social work apparently despised by our critics) to instill in the recipient poor the attitudes and mores congenial to economic performance. But the Victorian social workers, because they were living in the same society, did not uproot traditional mores or impose wholly alien values. When a similar transformation is attempted by donors and administrators from different societies with different values, then it is likely to be socially disruptive and to amount to coercion. On the other hand, simply to give aid to the poor is likely to produce the effects noted in Micronesia. And the more responsive the poor are to economic incentives, the more likely they are to be pauperized by unqualified generosity.

POINT 17. Almost any group of countries, however randomly selected, could be shown to possess common characteristics. It might be argued, for instance, that Latin America is part of the West rather than of the Third World because it is Christian. Far from denying that there was a basis for Third World solidarity, as Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten allege, we actually pointed out what that basis was—namely, that LDC governments have a common interest in demanding and taking money from the West. Hence our arguments that staff members of international organizations had become, in effect, "union organizers for the Third World."

POINT 18. The most indigent groups of all are the aborigines, pygmies, bushmen, and desert peoples. These are indeed ignored in development literature—perhaps rightly so. We have already dealt with some of the difficulties attached to the well-intentioned "basic needs" approach.

POINTS 14 and 20. Our critics describe the argument that "aid is given for restitution and to purge guilt" as a red herring. We entirely agree. For Mrs. Stewart and Mr. Streeten here "summarize" not our views, but the arguments of many aid advocates as to why aid should be given. We quoted these arguments only to refute them. Here again, they attribute to us views which are the exact opposite of those which we hold and which we expressed clearly in our article.

What they describe variously as "the basic argument" and "the most powerful argument" for aid, of course, prejudges the issue. If aid were simply a matter of U.S. citizens sacrificing $5 of health expenditure in the certain knowledge that the ordinary citizens of Mali

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would enjoy the doubling of the medical services they receive (or similar improvements in their education, food, shelter, public-health standards, etc.), there would be little difficulty about it. But developed countries can be under no obligation to provide foreign aid if, on the contrary, it seems likely on balance to retard development and prolong poverty.

This is not just a question of a leaky bucket from which a disproportionate amount of aid leaks to the rich, aid administrators, and governments while the poor still benefit, though to a diminished degree. As we have been compelled to repeat *ad nauseam*, aid has a whole host of adverse political and economic effects which far outweigh any marginal contribution it may make to development or to the relief of poverty. As to Roosevelt's hose (point 14), you have a duty to turn it on the fire in your neighbor's house only if you are certain that it is connected to the water main. If it contains gasoline, or water and gasoline, or if its contents are a mystery, then the prudent citizen should not be persuaded that it is his moral duty to act as if he were certain that the hose contained water only.

Women & Society

To the Editor of Commentary:

I found Brigitte Berger's article, "What Women Want" [March], tremendously interesting. I believe it is an accurate portrayal of what is happening to women.

Eleanor McGovern
Washington, D.C.

To the Editor of Commentary:

In "What Women Want" Brigitte Berger reveals herself as deeply antagonistic to the women's movement. What concerns me about her article, however, is not her opposition to feminism, a position she is entitled to have and express, but rather her unfair description of feminist literature and her view of the dissociation between private and public life in America. . . .

Having attempted to efface the dignity of the women's movement by calling it, in her first sentence, the "woman question" (at least she does not say "problem"), Mrs. Berger tells us that feminist literature is guilty of "a sense of unreality [in] its description of the world" and a "lack of perspective" and is "curiously flat and lopsided," incapable of entertaining disagreement, and "disturbingly ignorant of the most basic . . . biological and social data."

What Mrs. Berger must mean is that the anger and bitterness expressed by thousands of women today—in both eloquent and excessive language—are not in themselves data and that we can afford to dismiss their view of reality as distorted, as if they and their outpourings were not *per se* a significant and observable social reality. . . .

When a sociologist of Mrs. Berger's stature expresses herself in such terms, she makes it difficult for us to take the rest of what she has to say seriously, even though she has raised points that feminists themselves have been grappling with for years. . . .

What I find most disturbing about Mrs. Berger's essay is her belief that women are banging on the doors of public life because they believe it to be rewarding. Certainly, many women do have that impression, and they are entitled to find the truth for themselves without being told by those already there that it's not all it's cracked up to be—go home and be grateful for the vacuum cleaner. However, the point that many feminists are making is that the world out there is bankrupt because it has cut itself off from women and from the life and feeling which is preserved in women, or which women have preserved. The "public sector" will not go away; women are saying, let us in because we have what is needed to make it better—those qualities men have praised us for to our faces, laughed at and denigrated behind our backs, and built a disturbed society without. Not permitted this, women can only turn to one another and to extremist positions—not because that is where they want to be necessarily, but because there usually comes a time when exclusion turns into exclusivity.

Mrs. Berger tells us that the source of modern alienation is not industrial progress but "the disruption of traditional cultural patterns, and especially . . . the weakening of the family." Wrong. If we can reduce this complex issue to so simple a level without sounding ridiculous, the source of modern alienation is the fact that those traditional values (whatever she means by them; I assume she does not mean nationalism, military heroism, etc.) have not been permitted any significant function outside the home. Mrs. Berger writes that the family is "somewhat protected from the turbulence of modern society." This is an unfortunate statement because those who buy the idea will perpetuate a system in which the public sector will continue to "protect" itself against all those values whose passing Mrs. Berger laments.

Esther F. Hyneman
Long Island University
Brooklyn, New York

To the Editor of Commentary:

Brigitte Berger's article is not an answer to Sigmund Freud's famous rhetorical question, but a convoluted argument in defense of "democratic capitalism" against a shadowy adversary called the "women's-liberation movement." In defending "democratic capitalism," Mrs. Berger compares American feminist goals unfavorably with those of women of the Muslim world. But her summary of the position of women in Islamic countries is distorted by severe oversimplification. For example, she does not acknowledge that in several areas, especially that of inheritance laws, traditional Islamic women have had more rights than their sisters in Judaism and Christianity. She talks about the horrors of "male chauvinism" in the Islamic Middle East without acknowledging the many Muslim male feminists active in reforms for women. She uses Kuwait as an example of enlightened treatment of women in the Middle East. Yet Kuwait is one of only nine countries in the world that still does not allow women the most basic of human rights—the right to vote. As for the kibbutz, many scholars in recent years have questioned whether the Israeli kibbutzim have really accomplished their goal of liberating women or whether they have only professionalized housework. Kibbutz leaders acknowledge the fact that the "problem of women" is severe—when families leave a kibbutz it is usually because the adult woman is discontented with her laundry-kitchen role.

I would like to take issue with some of Mrs. Berger's other assertions. . . .

There is no evidence that a mother and father who both work are less effective as parents than a family in which one parent stays

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home to take care of the children and the house.

Most women do not work to "find themselves," as Mrs. Berger claims. The special *U.S. News & World Report* article (January 15, 1979) demonstrates that most women work because they must: married women work because inflation has eaten into family incomes; in addition, 19 per cent of all working women are single and self-supporting, and another 24 per cent are divorced, separated, or widowed and in varying degrees need to earn their own living. Since women are paid approximately 58.9 per cent of what a typical male worker earns and work mostly at the dullest routine jobs, it is hard to believe that most of them are seeking self-fulfillment in the "world of work" outside the home.

The amount of money thus far put into child-care centers by the U.S. government is so minuscule that it is laughable for Mrs. Berger to think that it could contribute to the expansion of "the power of the state." The total sum in Mondale's bill amounted to half the cost of one nuclear submarine. . . .

Even though the United States can be proud of the comparatively high status of our women, this does not mean that we have no important feminist issues left to be resolved. The *U.S. News & World Report* article summarized several of these issues: a widening gap between the wages of men and women; sexual harassment on the job; the steering of young women away from technical occupations into "feminist " fields; and the desperate need for child care for the woman "head of household." These are only a few of the most pressing problems for women. It would be tragic if citizens of the United States ignored the basic national goal of seeking legal equality and opportunity within our democratic system because we appear to have made more progress toward these ideals than some other areas of the world.

SUSAN H. GROSS
St. Louis Park, Minnesota

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Why does Brigitte Berger scold American women so mercilessly? Why does she denounce them for having aspirations that go beyond home and family? . . .

What Mrs. Berger fails to see is that women no longer agree to live chained to a shadowy half-life in the cave of the private sphere. What she chooses to ignore is that for more and more women, work pays for their own keep and for that of their children. Even for those who have providing, caring husbands, work buys a feeling of independence, the right to have a voice, to help make decisions. . . .

For the truth is that the family to which Mrs. Berger sends us back no longer has the resources to sustain women throughout life. The extended family is mobile and splintered; children in the nuclear family grow up and move away. By age forty-five many non-working women are left with nothing but time on their hands and a sense of frustration at not having prepared themselves for the future with greater foresight. . . .

All classes of women in America have benefited from the efforts of a vigorous minority to enhance women's possibilities for growth and fulfillment. . . .

KINNERET CHIEL
Woodbridge, Connecticut

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

In answer to Freud's question—"What do women want; my God, what *do* they want?"—Brigitte Berger strikes a happy note of moderation.

The lack of perspective that Mrs. Berger finds in current writing on the "woman question" is not altogether due to inadequate information; it is also due to the fact that much of this writing is propaganda, a goad to action, and as such it employs such well-known propaganda devices as the big lie, the half-truth, the epithet, and the non sequitur. . . .

The counter-movement of men's liberation indicates a rebellion against the male's obligations and a yearning for lost nurturance and feminine support. Only two out of five men want children. If women are wise, therefore, they will temper their speed and set out to counter the counter-movement. . . .

GRACE RUBIN-RABSON
Los Angeles, California

BRIGITTE BERGER writes:

Rather than address the various responses individually, let me try to clarify those opinions that seem to have evoked the strongest reactions.

My brief essay was intended neither to rail against the concerns of the women's movement nor to proclaim any particular revelations as to what women really want. I tried, rather, to point to the underlying social, political, and economic structures that have enabled our society to deviate from the pattern which has prevailed throughout most of human history and which still prevails today in large areas of the contemporary world. In this traditional pattern, all individuals, and women probably more so than anyone else, are locked into immutable positions. I argued that a pluralistic, democratic capitalist system is better equipped than any other system to liberate us from this common human pattern. I proposed that unless the women's movement understands that its causes are closely interwined with a political-economic system of a particular kind, it may in the end destroy the very foundation that makes the existence of a liberation movement possible.

Some of the responses assume that I am antagonistic to the women's movement. I hoped I had made it amply clear that I am deeply concerned with the position of women in modern society. However, my contention is that many of the issues brought forward by the women's movement are secondary ones. My quarrel—if you want to call it that—with the women's movement, then, is over its narrowness.

A great variety of causes—often contradictory and hostile to each other—are espoused by different women's groups. It has become clear by now that liberation means different things to different people. To some it means being able to leave the household and find meaning in the world of work; to others, it means leaving the world of work for the advantages of the household. Some American women feel that liberation is being a soldier in the armed services or a quarterback on a football team. A great many women under Communism long to be with their children and to pursue interests other than work. The majority of Muslim women seem to find their liberation in service to their families and their religion. I would not wish to judge who is right and who is wrong in these matters. Any attempt to elevate one goal above another is arrogant, ethnocentric, or loaded with class biases. My emphatic position is that *theoretically* there is no higher or lower form of consciousness—*practically*, therefore, the issue seems to me to center around the institutionalization of structures that provide the widest variety of

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choice for all. And again, so far, the empirical evidence points clearly to the kind of pluralistic, democratic system that operates under a market economy. It is the kind of system that has developed in the West, especially in the United States.

One serious misunderstanding relates to my position on the participation of women in the labor force. Women have always worked. Today their work is split more and more between household and job. I agree with the findings reported in *U.S. News & World Report*, which Susan H. Gross cites, that for most women employment has become an economic necessity. This is not to deny that some women also truly enjoy their jobs, just as some women truly enjoy their families. In this sense, women are not different from men. What I am skeptical about, however, is whether work still suffices as the chief source of identity and meaning for either women or men.

Permit me to push my concerns a little further still. My article sought to open up areas that have been woefully ignored in the narrowly defined preoccupations of the women's movement. There are many urgent questions still to be addressed that are of vital importance to women and society today. One such question, for instance, would have to address itself to the problem of whether a pluralistic, democratic system can survive without economic pluralism—that is to say, to what degree is freedom of choice for *all* individuals in all areas of life dependent upon a particular economic order.

An equally important question pertains to public policy. How can the freedom to choose how one wants to live, a freedom that is so central to the American experience, be maintained vis-à-vis the current trend toward centralization of functions and elimination of all ethnic, religious, and value differences? And yet another complex of issues turns around the uniqueness and particularity of women. Indeed, how can the special visions of women and their unique contributions to society be preserved and enhanced, as Esther F. Hyneman asks?

Isaac Bashevis Singer

To the Editor of Commentary:

"Tell me, . . . did you ever actually see such Polish Jews [as Isaac Bashevis Singer describes]? Were Jewish daughters in Poland really so 'available'? What's going on here? And we keep silent! Is there no one to say a word against this mockery of the crown of our people —the Polish Jew? Shall we allow a fool to convert all of Polish Jewry into one brothel?" So wrote Leo Finkelstein in 1950.

What *is* going on here?

I am not concerned so much with Singer himself. There is no doubt that he is a brilliant storyteller and a major literary figure who can delight his audience. He has, after all, won the Nobel Prize. But I am concerned with the Jewish reaction to Singer. Less with what his writings say about him than with what the Jewish response to his writings says about us. For how does it happen that of the plethora of articles by Jews that have appeared on Singer, including Ruth R. Wisse's "Singer's Paradoxical Progress" [February], and especially since the announcement of the Nobel Prize, there is only adulation, ecstasy, and reverence? Singer has been raised to the level of a veritable oracle. One hardly hears a critical word. What *is* going on here?

The absence of outrage has been the worst outrage of all.

When Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote his paean to East European Jewry, *The Earth Is the Lord's*, few favorable reviews appeared. Most critics labeled it unrealistic, exaggerated, untrue. Perhaps it was an exaggeration, if one took it to mean that every East European Jew was a scholar and a saint. . . .

But are Singer's writings "true"? The corruption, the adultery, the demonicism, the philandering, the decay, the perversion, which pervade Singer's picture of Polish Jewry—is it all "true"?

Is it true, as Singer argues in *A Young Man in Search of Love*, that "the sexual organs express more of the human soul than all other parts of the body, even the eyes"? Is it "true," as Singer tells us in the same work, that if only "Tolstoy could have described Anna Karenina's sexual relationships with her husband and later with her lover," we would really know her? Is it "true" that if we "take away . . . sex, there is no literature"? Or that "Sholem Aleichem was a good middle-class man who knew little about the darker aspects of life"? . . .

How do we react to a man whose first story, Mrs. Wisse tells us, "ends in a shocking scene. The ailing father is asked by his daughter, a prostitute, to roll over in bed so that she might use the other half for her trade"? And how can Mrs. Wisse see the author as only "a rather Puckish character"?

If it is questionable whether a writer with such a pervasive and enduring mania for sexual exhibitionism is capable of telling us the "truth" about East European Jewry, why do we keep silent?

Those who were not philanderers, adulterers, murderers, seducers, or religious fools, whose faith was neither in demons nor in sex—surely not a minority—are lying in unmarked graves throughout Poland. What of them? If Singer's picture of Polish Jewry is accepted —and his immense popularity makes that at least a possibility—what is the image of that civilization which will be left to us who survive, and to our children? Indeed, if Singer's picture is authentic, we must wonder if we should survive at all. To perpetuate that?

Of course there was ugliness among the Jews of Poland. Of course there were prostitutes and beggars. But Singer's stories are like describing a field in which there are lovely flowers and wild grass and verdant bushes by looking only at the worms under the rocks.

The Baal Shem taught that when a man beholds evil, it has been shown to him because he possesses part of it.

Singer's writings revolve around a fascination with sexuality and the demonic. These were precisely the two dominant environmental realities of ancient Israel: the fertility cult and the demonic myth. Their defeat, by sanctifying the sexual urge within the family and the home and looking behind the mystery of the demonic to the Creator God who demands justice from man, marked the emergence of biblical Judaism. Now a writer resurrects these two elemental forces of paganism in a series of novels and stories and is congratulated, not simply by those who inhabit the fringes of society, but by representatives of the establishment itself, by those who allegedly profess Judaism. Why? What does this mean? Does no one see the incompatibility of Singer's values with Jewish teaching? Is there no one to hold up a mirror of Jewish doctrine against Singer's views?

I would suggest two theories to

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explain American Jewry's silence.

The first is that it reflects our lack of authenticity. We have made a caricature out of Judaism, not only by the vulgarism and crass commercialism of our communal life, but more to the point, by abdicating our intellectual life to the fads of the time. The true faith of American Jews, especially the intellectuals, has become whatever happens at the moment to be "in"—liberalism, liberation, cults, sexual experimentation, etc.; authentic Jewish teaching is little heard. The American Jew may well be on the way to becoming the new pagan, whose hands are the hands of Jacob but whose voice and mind are those of Esau. Approval of Singer may reflect our spiritual ambivalence, our secret desire to repudiate the moral direction of 3,000 years of Jewish history in favor of the worship of sensuality and fear of the demonic, hearing fiendish voices instead of the still, small one and finding meaning in our animal nature instead of in the power of man to transcend himself.

My second theory is more pragmatic. Consider: if East European Jewry really was what Heschel said it was in *The Earth Is the Lord's,* if it was even one-tenth of what Heschel says it was, then we American Jews would have to come to terms with the corruption of our Jewish lives, individually and communally. We would have to see ourselves as the last generation of Jews who, still possessing the key to a treasury of the spirit, have abandoned it for the stock market which has become our prayer book; for Miami Beach, our holy of holies; and for "fun," our first and last commandment. But if East European Jewry was what Bashevis Singer says it was, if it was even one-tenth of what Singer says it was, then we need not feel guilty. Then we can continue our ways, adultering, philandering, cheating, corrupting, and making of our faith a sham, in the comforting belief that, after all, it was always like that! That's what the Jews of Eastern Europe were—philanderers, adulterers, and corrupters. So why should we be better?

Who will speak the truth? . . .

[Rabbi] SAMUEL H. DRESNER
Moriah Congregation
Deerfield, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

One essential element seems to be missing from the accounts of Isaac Bashevis Singer's winning the Nobel Prize for Literature: that in honoring Singer an entire literature has been honored. This is not only because he represents a literature in a language that is now dying and whose giants, like Sholem Aleichem and Sholem Asch, have somehow been overlooked by the Swedish Academy; it is also, and more importantly, because the element of humanity in Singer's writing—which is what has attracted his readers as well as the Swedish Academy—is the main characteristic of all Yiddish literature, a sophisticated folk literature which is concerned with little people, the ones who toil—workers, artisans, small shopkeepers, farmers, and even old Warsaw's petty thieves. You cannot help being humane when you write in Yiddish. It is to be hoped that Singer's Nobel Prize will attract the world's attention to Yiddish literature. . . .

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London, England

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RUTH R. WISSE writes:

Though the letters of Sydor Rey and Rabbi Samuel H. Dresner seem in perfect contradiction to each other, they are actually equally symptomatic of the problem facing the Jewish writer—more especially the Yiddish writer—as he plies his literary trade. Mr. Rey's claim that "you cannot help being humane when you write in Yiddish," and Rabbi Dresner's outrage against Singer's pagan misrepresentation of the "true" Polish Jew, both derive from the same assumption that Yiddish literature must further the moral directives of Judaism, and that the Yiddish writer is a spiritual custodian of East European Jewry. If Yiddish literature does differ from other modern literatures, it is mostly in the expectations of its audience, which continues to uphold a mid-19th-century ideal of the novelist as moralist, despite many proofs to the contrary. This "Jewish" expectation of accountability has had a bracing effect on the work of Bashevis Singer, who can still provoke his readers to anger, and obviously delights in doing so.

Politics & Literature

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Pearl K. Bell's discussion of Dan Jacobson's latest novel, *The Confessions of Josef Baisz* [Fiction, "Imaginings of Africa," April], betrays a literary sensibility seemingly innocent of political understanding. As Mrs. Bell admits ("What are we to make of this parable?"), Jacobson's purpose has escaped her; she even cites a particularly inane British reviewer (unspecified) to the same effect. And yet Jacobson's purpose is plain indeed, and the issue he addresses is one of capital importance: how do dictatorships work? That is to say, what is the motivation of the many lesser men who make possible the rule of a handful of politburo masters or of the single dictator? We all know how dictatorships "work" in a technical sense; they are bureaucracies, only more so. We need not ask what motivates the masters or the single leader, the answer is obvious enough: quite aside from all the enjoyments of privilege, great political power is its own reward. But the far greater question is the attitude of the common folk and of the many lesser operators who make the thing possible. In his marvelously persuasive book, Jacobson has gone a long way toward uncovering the psychological mechanism that explains the phenomenon, and Mrs. Bell has not served COMMENTARY readers well by dismissing the work as a writer's exercise in imaginative construction.

EDWARD N. LUTTWAK
Bethesda, Maryland

PEARL K. BELL WRITES:

Edward N. Luttwak's letter betrays a political sensibility seemingly innocent of literary understanding, as his ingenuous conclusion makes plain. If he finds cause for rebuke in my reading of Dan Jacobson's novel as "an exercise in imaginative construction," then he does not know what a novel is, and how a work of literature differs from, say, a study of the military strategy of the Roman empire or a scholarly analysis of coups d'état. I suspect that Mr. Luttwak also has an imperfect grasp of the difference between "imaginative" and "imaginary," which led him to use the former when he meant the latter. In other words, he deplores my failure to appreciate the uninvented textbook accuracy of Jacobson's novel, which Mr. Luttwak believes was written to demonstrate how minor cogs make the wheel of dictatorship go 'round. Though the political machinations of Josef Baisz are certainly an important part of his story, they are by no means all that Jacobson is concerned with. As a novelist, his intentions were more complex and demanding than those of a diagrammatic treatise about the "psychological mechanism" of dictatorship, and *The Confessions of Josef Baisz* attempts to portray a repellent but highly enigmatic human being whose motives for malevolence are much less clear-cut and comprehensible than Mr. Luttwak seems to find them. In reading the book solely as political analysis, he diminishes what he means to praise. For Dan Jacobson was indeed engaged, as a novelist should be, in the work of imaginative construction; regrettably, it was not convincing.

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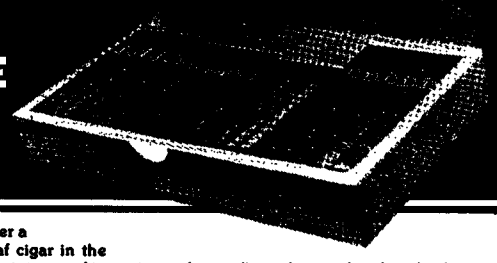

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The War Against Zimbabwe

Bayard Rustin

NO ELECTION held in any country at any time within memory has been more widely or vociferously scorned by international opinion than the election conducted last April in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe Rhodesia. In scores of other countries, non-democratic governments periodically stage elections whose predetermined results are never challenged or questioned, even by the world's democracies. Indeed, just two weeks before the Rhodesian election, the Iranian government held a referendum in which the people were asked to approve the establishment of an "Islamic republic." Though a constitution had not yet been drafted, and though the vote took place during a period of growing repression of civil liberties, widespread separatist rebellions, and a reign of terror by semi-secret courts dispensing "revolutionary justice," no government raised objections to the whole procedure or questioned the validity of its predictable outcome.

In contrast to the silent acquiescence in what passes for elections in the world's tyrannies, the outcry against the Rhodesian election has been deafening. The United Nations Security Council immediately passed a resolution condemning it and calling upon all countries not to lift economic sanctions against Zimbabwe Rhodesia. And the New York *Times,* urging no change in the Carter administration's Rhodesian policy, announced that it would be "a moral and diplomatic disaster" for the United States to recognize the legitimacy of the election or of the government resulting from it. The *Times*'s wish has since been granted.

Few critics of the election have even pretended to have an open mind on the subject. United Nations Ambassador Andrew Young, who had earlier described as "neofascist" both the interracial transitional government in Rhodesia and anyone who supported it, announced that the election was "rigged" and called for "new elections without pressures." Congressman Stephen Solarz, the chairman of the House African Affairs Subcommittee, said the election no more expressed the will of the people than did elections in the Soviet Union. (He had earlier helped defeat a move to send a congressional observer team to Rhodesia to determine if, in fact, such a harsh judgment of the election were warranted.) Columnist Tom Wicker, who had predicted that the civil war would prevent the Rhodesian government from conducting any election, let alone a fair one, dismissed the absence of major disruption during the voting as immaterial, and observed that the newly elected government of Bishop Abel T. Muzorewa simply could not be accepted as "a legitimate member of the family of nations." And a group of 99 Americans, ranging from intellectuals and others on the far Left to liberal civil-rights and labor leaders, issued a statement a month *before* the election calling it a "fraud" since "the people of Zimbabwe cannot vote freely with a gun at their heads."

Contrary to these predictions and opinions, however, the people of Zimbabwe did vote in an election that was freer than most held in the developing world—freer, certainly, than elections held anywhere in Africa with the exception of Gambia, Botswana, and possibly several other small countries. Moreover, not only did they not vote with "a gun at their heads," many voted with genuine, unmistakable enthusiasm. The contrast between how the election was viewed by most Zimbabweans (the name preferred by the blacks) and how it was described by critics outside the country is nothing less than extraordinary.

As one of the nine members of the Freedom House delegation which observed the election (others included the journalist Roscoe Drummond, former Congressman Allard K. Lowenstein, and Professor Maurice C. Woodard of Howard University), I had the opportunity to speak on

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the spot with hundreds of voters in different election districts, as well as with leaders of the participating parties, knowledgeable correspondents, and other international observers. I also met with opponents of the election who were part of the so-called external forces or the Patriotic Front and with professors and students at the university of Salisbury, most of whom boycotted the election. Our delegation stayed throughout the five-day election, visiting more than 100 polling stations throughout the country. Three members remained in Zimbabwe Rhodesia until all the votes were counted and any complaints of irregularities could be received.

The delegation, whose members had professionally monitored previous elections in 26 countries, was excellently qualified to make an informed and objective judgment about the fairness of the election and the attitude of the people toward it. Our conclusion, reached unanimously, was that "the election represented a significant advance toward multiracial majority rule" and was "a useful and creditable step toward the establishment of a free society in Zimbabwe Rhodesia."

To be sure, the election was held under extraordinary circumstances. The Patriotic Front had vowed to use violence to disrupt the voting—Joshua Nkomo, the leader of one wing of the Front, had predicted a "bloodbath" at the polls, a warning repeated by many of the guerrillas—and so martial law was in force throughout most of the country. The security forces at the polls protected voters and gave them a feeling of reassurance. Their presence may also have had a coercive effect, but we saw no evidence that they compelled people either to vote or to vote for a particular candidate. (The voting was by secret ballot.) In many localities where people did not vote in large numbers, the government did not try to increase the turnout. Moreover, it was in the large urban centers, where the voters were the most sophisticated and the least subject to exhortation and coercion, that the highest levels of participation occurred.

This is not to say that the government took a passive role in the election. Everyone eighteen years of age and older was allowed to vote, and the government encouraged participation through publicity about the election and voting procedures. But these actions were not inappropriate in a situation where most people were voting for the first time in their lives; and their overall effect was to increase majority control over the results. At the same time, the government sharply curtailed the nonviolent expression of opposition to the election. Such expression was allowed in some places, such as at the university in Salisbury where we witnessed a demonstration urging a boycott of the voting. But on the whole, the opponents of the election were not allowed freely to communicate their point of view.

What effect this restriction had on the election is hard to say, since voters were subject to many conflicting pressures. White farmers and employers encouraged people to vote, as did the local militias (the security forces organized by the black political parties). But voting was also discouraged by the fear of disruption at the polls and by the Patriotic Front's warnings that it would punish anyone who participated. While the disruptions did not occur on a large scale, some voters were killed in transit to the polls by land mines which the guerrillas had laid.

No one can say with certainty what influence these different pressures had on the voters. But clearly a very large proportion of the population felt free to participate or not to participate in the election. Taking into consideration disputes over the size of the voting populations in some districts and voting by some teenagers under the qualifying age of eighteen, the turnout was still well over 50 per cent and was most likely nearer the official figure of 64.5 per cent. The turnout was unexpectedly high, well above the minimum figure the government felt was necessary to demonstrate majority support for the election. Since opponents of the election would undoubtedly have used a low turnout as evidence of majority opposition to the election, they are hardly in a position to deny the significance of the turnout that did take place.

Moreover, the voters had, in the view of the Freedom House delegation, "a sense of meaningful choice." The nearly 1,900,000 black votes were divided among four competing parties, with Bishop Muzorewa's United African National Council (UANC) receiving an overwhelming 65 per cent majority. The post-election charge by the Reverend Ndabaningi Sithole that there were "gross irregularities" during the election only underscores the fact that the competition was keen, since he was deeply disappointed by his party's distant (14 per cent) second-place finish. (Significantly, his allegations did not focus on the mechanics of the election, which no one has challenged, but on the methods used by Muzorewa's party to increase its vote; and the allegations have not been supported by the evidence or testimony of the overwhelming majority of international observers.)

It is true, of course, that the two external parties—Nkomo's Zambia-based Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Robert Mugabe's Mozambique-based Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU)—did not appear on the ballot. But the common belief that they were excluded from the election is simply inaccurate. Not only were Nkomo and Mugabe invited to participate, they were both offered seats on the transitional government's Executive Council, along with Prime Minister Ian Smith, Bishop Muzorewa, Reverend Sithole, and Chief Jeremiah Chirau. But Nkomo and Mugabe refused to have anything to do with the election. Still, voters were allowed to cast protest votes by spoiling their ballots or leaving them blank. Some did, since the number of spoiled or blank ballots was highest in districts where the ex-

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ternal parties have the most support. Yet the percentage of such ballots never reached 10 per cent in any single district, and nationally only 3.35 per cent of the voters chose to protest in this way.

WHILE the election thus did not meet the rigorous standards that one would apply to elections in Western democracies, it was remarkably free and fair, especially considering that a civil war was in progress and that most of the population had never before participated in an election. But the opponents of the election—not just the Patriotic Front, the front-line states (Zambia, Mozambique, Botswana, Tanzania, and Angola), the Communist world, and the United Nations, but also political leaders and publicists in Western democracies, including the United States—have not shown the least interest in the question of how democratic the voting process was. As the New York *Times* put it, "The real issue is not how the election was conducted, but what it was about."

In this connection, two major objections have been raised, the first having to do with the new constitution. It is charged that this constitution was never submitted to the black voters for approval; that it reserves, for a period of ten years, 28 of the 100 parliamentary seats for the 4 per cent white minority; and that it preserves white domination over the army, police, judiciary, and civil service. The second objection is that the internal settlement, under which the constitution was adopted and the election was held, did not include the Patriotic Front, and so would not end the civil war but lead to its escalation, with the likely involvement of Cuban troops. Summing up these objections, the *Times* has charged that the internal settlement "is little more than a device for keeping real power in the hands of Rhodesia's small white minority" and is, therefore, "rightly suspect in black African eyes" and "a recipe for civil war."

Here again, the views of the opponents of the election outside Zimbabwe Rhodesia and the views of the people inside the country diverge in a most extraordinary way. The Zimbabweans participated in the election with enthusiasm precisely because they felt it marked the beginning of real majority rule and would also bring an end to the war. Virtually all the people I spoke with gave these reasons to explain why they were voting.

The "internal leaders" who negotiated the settlement with Ian Smith felt that the agreement reached on March 3, 1978 established, in the words of Bishop Muzorewa, "the machinery for dismantling the structures and practices of colonialism and racism and of minority rule." They went into the negotiations with the objectives of destroying the legal foundation for institutionalized racial discrimination and winning the transfer of power from the minority to the majority in an election based on the principle of one person/one vote. The first objective was achieved on October 10, 1978 with the abolition of all statutory discrimination, including the Land Tenure Act which reserved lands for white ownership. The second objective was achieved with the election in April.

The argument that the constitution was never submitted to the black voters for their approval is weak. Throughout the talks, black negotiators reported back to the executive bodies of their respective parties to get their approval for any agreements that were made. At one point in the negotiations, when Bishop Muzorewa walked out in a dispute over the number of white seats in the new parliament, a special meeting of the UANC's Provincial Council was called which was attended by 800 delegates from all over the country. These delegates represented local constituents who were kept informed about the progress of the talks. In the view of the *black* parties, a referendum on the constitution would simply have delayed independence and exposed their party workers to increased guerrilla violence. And it would have been redundant, they felt, since participation in the election was itself a vote in favor of the constitution and the internal settlement—a point implicitly recognized by those who opposed the election because of "what it was about."*

The black negotiators compromised on the issue of the 28 white seats; they were, after all, *negotiating*, and they did not feel that they had sacrificed their fundamental position. In the first place, such an arrangement was in the tradition of Britain's African decolonization policy of "multiracialism." (In Zambia, for example, the special allotment of parliamentary seats to the non-African minority was not discontinued until 1968, four years after

* It is true that a referendum on the internal settlement was held for whites. This was done to fulfill Smith's 1977 electoral pledge that whites would be consulted on any agreement negotiated with internal black leaders—a pledge made to shore up the confidence of the whites, whom Smith had promised only a few years before that there would not be black majority rule "for a thousand years." In this connection, Andrew Young's repeated claim that 40 per cent of the whites preferred the Anglo-American plan to the internal settlement is without foundation. In the 1977 election in which Smith had sought a mandate to negotiate an internal settlement, his Rhodesian Front party won 85.4 per cent of the votes. The Rhodesian Action party, which opposed any move toward majority rule, won 9 per cent of the votes, while the National Unifying Force, which backed the Anglo-American plan, received only 4 per cent. In the subsequent referendum, held in January 1979, over 84 per cent of the whites voted in favor of the internal settlement, and once again the opposition consisted overwhelmingly of those who opposed majority rule altogether.

It is possible that Young's figure of 40 per cent was reached by adding the total number of no votes on the referendum to the number of whites who didn't vote. This may also be how President Carter arrived at the figure of only 60 per cent white support for the constitution, which was one of the reasons he gave at his June 7 press conference for not lifting sanctions. This is of course an exceedingly duplicitous use of statistics. If the same method were applied to the 1976 U.S. election, one would conclude that only 27 per cent of the American electorate supported President Carter while 73 per cent opposed him.

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independence.) Then, too, all the plans that have been introduced for a negotiated transition to majority rule have made a special provision for white representation in parliament. Even the now obsolete Anglo-American plan, which is vigorously defended by Ambassador Young, reserves 20 of the 100 seats for the white minority. During Nkomo's bilateral talks with Smith in 1976, he proposed an election with three different voting rolls which would have assured the whites a substantial minority of legislative seats. He did so, as he said, "to meet fears expressed by the Rhodesian Front" (Smith's party) and "in a spirit of compromise." In the talks leading to the internal settlement, Smith demanded 34 seats for the whites. Muzorewa wanted the number limited to 20 but reluctantly compromised at 28 after his black negotiating partners, Sithole and Chirau, accepted that figure.

The blacks agreed to this arrangement for a ten-year period; they also agreed to clauses in the constitution which protect the institutional interests of the whites for an equal period, in order to reassure the white minority that its political and economic position would be stabilized under an African-dominated government. The alternative to this kind of settlement would have meant the inevitable flight of whites from the country and the collapse of the economy, as happened recently in Angola and Mozambique. Muzorewa has made the point that if independence is not to be a "hollow shell," Zimbabwe must not repeat the mistakes of other African countries which drove out indigenous skilled whites, and then in desperation rehired at three times the cost "economic mercenaries who were inevitably failures in their own countries and who came to Africa for what they could milk out of their hosts."

The internal settlement, then, was designed to provide a period of stable transition during which blacks could acquire the experience and skills they were denied under white rule. Muzorewa has promised training programs for Africans to achieve "*both* . . . the necessary efficiency and the necessary orientation to black majority rule" (emphasis added). He is not impatient, since black control over the institutions now dominated by whites is inevitable in a country 96 per cent black. Already the army is 85 per cent black and the police force is 75 per cent black, and the cabinet minister responsible for each force is also black. Moreover, all white officials are now answerable to a black head of state and to a parliament and cabinet which have over a two-thirds black majority.

While Muzorewa and the other internal black leaders have expressed a practical interest in retaining the skills and energies of the whites for Zimbabwe, expediency has not been their only consideration. Whites who have been four generations in Zimbabwe, Muzorewa has said, and who have no other home, must not be "driven out to nowhere." In an open letter to American blacks, Muzorewa has emphasized that Zimbabweans had never "fought the white man's skin. We fought his evil system. We fought his racism." Some people, he said, feel that we should "be ruthless with the white race. But I wish to warn against the reversal of discrimination . . . it makes us hypocrites to turn into black racists ourselves. It makes us oppressors and not liberators."

Ordinarily one might expect such sentiments to be applauded by Western liberals. But in fact, as Bishop Muzorewa said recently, while Zimbabweans "are prepared to forget the past and work together with our white brethren . . . some people in Britain, America, Africa, and other parts of the world appear unwilling to allow us to do so." Little attempt has been made even to understand the practical and moral aspects of the Bishop's position, which is viewed as a rationalization for continued white control of Zimbabwe Rhodesia. As a result, we have the paradoxical situation that a settlement which has been accepted by most people inside Zimbabwe Rhodesia as the best and only realistic course for their country to take is opposed by foreign advocates of "majority rule"!

THE negotiations leading to the internal settlement succeeded, where all previous attempts to negotiate a solution to the Rhodesian crisis failed, because three conditions prevailed. First, by the fall of 1976, the Smith regime had been forced by events to concede the principle of black majority rule. No single event broke the back of white resistance. Rather, it was a series of developments: the energy crisis and the Western economic recession which magnified the impact of sanctions on the Rhodesian economy; the collapse of Portuguese colonialism and the emergence of pro-Communist regimes in Angola and Mozambique; a sharp change in policy toward Rhodesia by both the United States and South Africa; and not least, the steady escalation of the guerrilla insurgency and the increased rate of white flight from the country. All these together compelled Smith to abandon his position of intransigence.

The second factor was the involvement in the talks of black leaders with a broad following in the country, in particular Bishop Muzorewa. The earliest talks (aboard the HMS *Tiger* in 1966 and the HMS *Fearless* in 1968, and the negotiations in 1971 between Smith and Sir Alec Douglas-Home, then British Foreign Minister) had been between Britain and Rhodesia and had bypassed the black majority entirely. Subsequent talks between Smith and Nkomo in 1975 and 1976 similarly lacked the involvement of broadly representative nationalist leaders. Nkomo certainly had long experience in the nationalist movement. But he had only limited support in the country, partly because of his narrow tribal base among the Ndebeles who make up only about 15 per cent of the black population. In addition, the talks were viewed by other nationalists as an attempt by Zambia's President

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Kaunda to impose his own candidate, Nkomo, as the leader of the internally divided nationalist movement. In fact, resentment against Zambian interference in Zimbabwean affairs has been one of the elements in the Rhodesian talks least understood by outsiders.

Muzorewa, unlike Nkomo, had for some time been thought to have the broadest popular support among Zimbabweans. Elected Rhodesia's first black bishop in 1968, he quickly earned the reputation of being a resolute defender of black interests and was barred by the government from visiting tribal trust lands. When the British appointed the Pearce Commission in 1971 to test the acceptability to blacks of the Smith-Home constitutional proposals, he was the only figure the different nationalist factions could agree upon to head the new African National Council (ANC), which was organized to mobilize the campaign for rejection. The campaign was successful, and during the course of it Muzorewa emerged as the preeminent black leader in the country.

Combining strong criticism of the Smith regime with appeals for racial reconciliation, Muzorewa has frequently drawn huge crowds at rallies, at times as many as 200,000 people, and his popularity was confirmed by his overwhelming victory in the election. He also has support among the guerrillas, most of whom left Rhodesia in the period following 1972 when his popularity was at its height. This helps explain why he is seen as the only nationalist leader capable of unifying the country.

After the collapse of the all-party Geneva talks in January 1977, Smith announced that he would seek talks with "moderate blacks," chiefly Muzorewa's ANC. Muzorewa refused to take part in any talks unless Smith was prepared to surrender power "immediately and unconditionally" to the black majority. But the decision of the five frontline presidents to give exclusive backing to the Patriotic Front produced great resentment in Muzorewa's party, which accused them of "launching a civil war" that would cause the slaughter of Zimbabweans. When the Organization of African Unity, at its Libreville meeting in July 1977, also decided to back the Patriotic Front, an internal settlement became the only course open to those who still wanted a negotiated solution. Sithole, a dedicated nationalist who had spent ten years in prison for his political activities and was, in fact, the founder of ZANU, had already agreed to negotiate with Smith. So when Smith, on November 24, 1977, conceded the principle of one-person/one-vote elections as the starting point for negotiations, Muzorewa announced that he was ready "to test him out."

MUZOREWA's desire for free, universal-suffrage elections was naturally strengthened by his confidence that he would win them convincingly. Similarly, not least among the reasons Nkomo and Mugabe have opposed such elections as the basis for a transfer of power from the white minority is their fear that they could not win on those terms. Both, in fact, have said that they would only consider holding elections *after* power had been transferred to the Patriotic Front. This, if anything, is a sure "recipe for civil war," since an election policed by the two guerrilla forces of the Patriotic Front would quickly degenerate into a war between them, a prospect that even Zambia's Kaunda is thought to fear.

Moreover, it is hardly likely that either Nkomo or Mugabe would govern democratically. Nkomo, given his narrow base, could only rule through force. And his close ties to Russia and Cuba, which have equipped and trained his army, make it inevitable that both countries would have a decisive influence in any government he headed. Mugabe, even more than Nkomo, favors totalitarianism out of ideological conviction. He has made no secret of his belief that "the multiparty system is a luxury," and he has announced that if the blacks of Zimbabwe do not like his ideology, "then we will have to reeducate them."

The absence, then, of Nkomo and Mugabe from the talks with Smith was the third factor which made it possible for the negotiations to succeed. There simply was no basis for a political compromise which included the Patriotic Front, a reality which the frontline states and the OAU recognized (and helped bring about) when they endorsed the Front and announced that an independent Zimbabwe could only be created through armed struggle.

For this reason, the insistence by both the British and American governments that any political solution which did not include the Patriotic Front was unacceptable can most generously be described as naive. If Nkomo and Mugabe had any interest at all in a political settlement, they would not have rejected out of hand the Anglo-American plan which called, among other things, for Smith's resignation in favor of a British resident commissioner who would head a transitional government; for a UN peace-keeping force which would supervise elections; and for the replacement of the Rhodesian army by a new Zimbabwe army which would, according to the then British Foreign Secretary David Owen, "be based on the liberation forces." Smith called the plan "a very cunning scheme" to hand power over to the Patriotic Front. But Nkomo and Mugabe did not think so, partly because they did not believe, as Andrew Young said they did, that they would win free elections. (Only Muzorewa and Sithole welcomed the plan, though they expressed concern that African elements in the UN peace-keeping force might aid the Patriotic Front, even to the extent of assisting in a coup.)

Similarly, Nkomo and Mugabe both reacted with manifest contempt to the subsequent British-American call for an all-party conference. Nkomo said he would have nothing to do with

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"all-party nonsense" and declared on September 11, 1978 that "We mean to get that country by force and we shall get it." Mugabe said he would attend such a conference, but only on the condition that "the entirety of the Salisbury regime must go and the enemy forces must be completely dismantled." Then, shortly after the announcement in Washington by the four members of the Rhodesian Executive Council that they would attend an all-party conference without preconditions, Mugabe's organization (ZANU) made public a death list which included 50 Zimbabweans associated with the internal settlement, including the three black members of the Executive Council. The document described these people as "Zimbabwean black bourgeoisie, traitors, fellow-travelers, and puppets of the Ian Smith regime, opportunistic running-dogs and other capitalist vultures."

Nkomo and Mugabe have adopted an equally uncompromising attitude toward each other, thus making a political compromise *within* the Patriotic Front no more likely than one between it and the parties to the internal settlement. The presidents of the frontline states have made repeated attempts to impose "unity" on ZANU (Mugabe) and ZAPU (Nkomo), but with little success. The formation in 1975 of a united army, the Zimbabwe People's Army (ZIPA), resulted in violent clashes between the ZANU and ZAPU forces and eventually in their complete separation. The Patriotic Front, established the following year, is a paper political alliance that has done nothing to increase military cooperation between the two guerrilla forces. On the contrary, Mugabe and his aides have long resented Nkomo's failure to commit his heavily armed forces to the war effort, alleging that he is conserving his army's strength for what he expects will be the final showdown with ZANU. In a statement directed at Nkomo, Mugabe recently warned that "Those who have not fought cannot reap the rewards of a victory to which they have contributed nothing."

THE current division within the guerrilla ranks—which persists despite a new effort to coordinate their military effort—must be seen against a background of fifteen years of splits, splits within splits, tribal/regional conflicts, fierce internal violence, and meddling by neighboring African states.* Indeed, in a curious, sordid, and illuminating way, the creation of the Patriotic Front can be traced to the most notorious act of internal violence, the murder of ZANU chairman Herbert Chitepo in Zambia on March 18, 1975. The killing, which was preceded by a mini-civil war within ZANU's ranks and by mass executions of a rebel group, prompted President Kaunda of Zambia to establish an international commission of inquiry consisting of representatives of 13 African states. After nine months of investigation, the commission found members of ZANU's high command guilty of the murder.† Mugabe, furious at the verdict and at the jailing of his ZANU comrades, denounced Kaunda and withdrew from Zambia to Mozambique where he consolidated ZANU's guerrilla forces. Shortly thereafter, Kaunda, hoping to resurrect Nkomo (whose reputation had been badly damaged by the failure of his talks with Smith), offered to release Chitepo's murderers if Mugabe would agree to a joint ZANU-ZAPU delegation at the Geneva talks. The deal was consummated and the Zambian high court acquitted the assassins who promptly joined Mugabe in Geneva, and the Patriotic Front came into being.

This incident may help explain why many Zimbabweans resent Zambian interference in their affairs, and do not regard the Patriotic Front as their chosen instrument for bringing peace and majority rule to their country. It may also explain why there is distrust of international institutions which have endorsed the Patriotic Front as the sole legitimate representative of the people of Zimbabwe; and of Western "progressives" who, as Muzorewa has said, "extol the armed struggle, especially from some safe distance from the death and the bloodshed and the tears and the misery."

IN THE wake of the election, the continued support of the Patriotic Front must be viewed as morally unconscionable. At the time the internal settlement was announced, Conor Cruise O'Brien commented (*New York Review of Books*, March 8, 1978) that if the Patriotic Front continued to kill people after free elections were held and a black majority government sat in Salisbury, then its behavior would be "morally equivalent" to that of such anti-democratic European terrorist groups as Baader-Meinhof and the IRA. All this has now come to pass, yet the Patriotic Front retains the support of the UN and

* Dr. Masipula Sithole, the brother of Ndabaningi Sithole and a ZANU activist for eight years, has just published an honest and courageous book, *Zimbabwe Struggles within the Struggle* (Rujeko Publishers, Salisbury, 1979), which tells the history of the conflicts within the Zimbabwe nationalist movement.

† The commission described one of the assassins, Josiah Tongogara, as a "man possessed of inordinate ambitions" who had engaged in "the systematic process of eliminating possible rivals by death. . . ." According to the commission's report, Tongogara had openly remarked that "he saw no reason why he should not be the first President in an independent Zimbabwe through the barrel of the gun." Remarkably, when Andrew Young was asked by interviewer Jonathan Power (London *Times*, May 22, 1978) if he saw any parallels between the American civil-rights movement and the Patriotic Front, he replied: "Nonviolence is in many ways being practiced by the Patriotic Front. . . . I asked one of their commanders, Tongogara, what they actually do in Rhodesia, and he said they're not doing much fighting, except when they are fired upon, or when the Rhodesian defense forces find them and try to run them out. Basically, what they're doing is moving around the villages and conducting political seminars and singing songs—which is exactly what we did."

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other international bodies, while the elected government of Zimbabwe Rhodesia is viewed as an "illegal" pariah state.*

It is especially interesting that the excommunication of Zimbabwe has been decreed in the name of racial self-determination, but in total disregard of the views of that country's black majority; and that the Patriotic Front is favored in the name of majority rule, but in total disregard of that group's anti-democratic outlook. Thus, we have the spectacle of the United Nations denying a platform to an "illegitimate" black African leader (as it did to Muzorewa), who is then greeted upon his return home by a cheering throng of over 150,000 blacks; and of the New York *Times*, ordinarily a proponent of political democracy, asserting that for the U.S. to "pressure" the Patriotic Front to come to terms with the newly elected black government in Zimbabwe Rhodesia "would be a betrayal of American support for majority rule."

One can account for such anomalies only if it is understood that the issue is not whether or not there shall be rule by the black majority, but what form such rule shall take. And here the alternatives are as clear as they were at an earlier time between white minority and black majority rule. For if the presidents of Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Angola have their way, majority rule will take a form more or less similar to what exists in their own countries; which is to say that it will be a dictatorship by a small black elite over a destitute black population. It is, of course, precisely this kind of "majority rule" that Muzorewa has said would be a betrayal, for it would have "the mere trappings of independence—a brand new flag, sleek and shiny limousines, black faces in parliament, the OAU, and the United Nations—while those in power are not accountable to the governed for their actions." In fact, it has been Muzorewa's rejection of "worn-out ideologies," of "political philosophies which could make people secondary to the state—which would regard people as expendable," which constitutes his indictment of the post-colonial experience in much of Africa, and which accounts for the antagonism to him and to Zimbabwe Rhodesia among those who cling to such ideologies and who rule uneasily over the increasingly disillusioned and discontented black masses. And it is, not least, the need to conceal the betrayal of independence and the self-infliction of poverty and political oppression which explains why the struggle for "majority rule" is proclaimed with such strenuous devotion.

INTO this essentially internal African debate have stepped the Soviet Union and its Cuban and East German proxies, seeking to exploit African conflicts and frustrations to advance Moscow's geopolitical ambitions. And into it also has wandered the United States, newly sensitive, as it would like to think, to the aspirations of black Africa and determined, as Secretary of State Vance has put it, not to "mirror Soviet and Cuban activities." The foremost U.S. objective has been to preserve American "credibility" in black Africa, the assumption being that this is the measure of our influence on the continent and is also the best and the only way (all military options having been ruled out) to deter the Russians. Anything we might do to undermine that credibility, it is thought, would only invite further Soviet intervention which we would not (and should not, given our Vietnam experience) be prepared to counter.

With respect to Zimbabwe Rhodesia, the price for maintaining American credibility among the frontline presidents and with Nigeria has been that we support—or at the very least, do nothing to oppose—the Patriotic Front. As a result, we have found ourselves, until now, tacitly aligned with groups armed by Moscow, hostile to America, antagonistic to democracy, and unpopular within Zimbabwe Rhodesia itself. And we have opposed the internal parties which look to us for support, share our professed belief in an open multiracial society, and have genuine popularity within the country. We have defended this policy in terms of our historic commitment as a nation to human rights and, more practically, in terms of protecting our country's vital interest in Africa and of preventing the escalation of civil war. Yet it has been hard for most Americans, or for the United States Congress, to understand how any of these objectives is served by promoting the Patriotic Front.

The fact is that this has not been the only practical course open to us. The psychology of appeasement is now so deeply rooted among most American officials and political commentators that they have, almost as a matter of course, underestimated our own strengths and the strengths of our friends, as well as the weaknesses of the Soviet position. U.S. officials tremble at the thought of a Nigerian oil embargo, forgetting the fact that Nigeria needs American capital and technology at least as much as America needs Nigerian oil. Most importantly, within Zimbabwe Rhodesia itself, there is now less sympathy for the guerrillas than ever before. The people are simply tired of violence, especially violence which has no purpose, since there is now a black majority government. If this government takes steps, as it has promised, to improve the social and economic position of the black population, the rate at which guerrillas will defect to

* The charge of illegality, which is contained in the two UN Security Council resolutions on the internal settlement and the election, is more than a little ironic, since it implicitly accepts the legality of British colonial rule in Rhodesia. "To the black majority," Muzorewa has said, "illegality was imposed on the country at the onset of British colonialism in 1890 and not in 1965 [when the Smith government issued its Universal Declaration of Independence from Britain]. We do not accept that there is any other authority than the black majority which can bestow legality to Zimbabwe."

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become part of the new order could increase dramatically. It is also possible that the Patriotic Front leaders will now negotiate with the Bishop if, as the London *Economist* has observed, they "are not to risk becoming the 30-year Arafats of southern Africa." Moreover, Zambia and Mozambique, which have suffered badly from the fighting and are heavily dependent on the much stronger economies of Zimbabwe Rhodesia and South Africa, are already under pressure internally to end their support of the Patriotic Front and to accommodate to the new reality. Zambia is particularly vulnerable, since more than half its trade and most of its food imports are now carried by rail through Zimbabwe Rhodesia.

Whether Moscow would be prepared, under these circumstances, to escalate the war is doubtful. At present, the army of Zimbabwe Rhodesia is, in African terms, a strong fighting force and more than a match for the divided Patriotic Front. To defeat it would require a major commitment by Soviet proxy forces at a time when the Cubans are overextended in Angola (where they now maintain a force of 45,000 military and civilian personnel). An intervention of this kind would be deeply resented in most of Africa, and it would strengthen opposition to détente in this country and weaken whatever chance there is for Senate ratification of SALT.

The Russians will, more likely than not, remain cautious and wait for an opportune moment to strike. The point is that it should not be our policy to create opportunities for them and to encourage the guerrillas to continue fighting, which is what the President's repudiation of the Muzorewa government in his June 7 statement has already done. Beyond the narrow issue of economic sanctions against Zimbabwe Rhodesia, there is the larger question of whether we will do anything to help the new black government to survive and continue to evolve in a democratic direction; or whether, by our inaction and failure of nerve, we will embolden its enemies and thus destroy any hope for democracy in the country. If we take the latter course, we will have done nothing to increase the credibility of the United States either in Africa or elsewhere. On the contrary, we will have raised a signal to all the world that this country no longer has the capacity to defend or even understand its interests, or to help those who, unlike ourselves, continue to believe in freedom.

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Misreading the Middle East

Elie Kedourie

THE five years or so which have elapsed since the Yom Kippur War have seen the United States sustain two very serious setbacks in the Middle East. In a surprisingly short space of time, the regime of the Shah—a principal U.S. ally in the area—has crumbled, while the new rulers of Iran are unstable, unpredictable, and unfriendly. Nobody can tell what the repercussions of these remarkable events will turn out to be, but it is sure beyond peradventure that, even in the best of circumstances, U.S. interests (public as well as private) and U.S. influence in Iran and in the region generally will have sustained a severe blow.

Ironically enough, the ally who has now been destroyed was himself chiefly instrumental in inflicting the other major defeat suffered during this decade by the U.S. (and the West generally) in the Middle East. It is notorious that the Shah was the most eager and the most pressing in persuading his confederates in OPEC to increase again and again the price of oil—an increase the economic and political consequences of which are as incalculable as they are ruinous. Ruinous, not only to OPEC's victims but also, as recent events have, again ironically, shown, to the Shah himself. He might still be on his throne had he not, dazzled by his easy spoils, spent and spent and spent, thus shaking, destabilizing, and discomforting hitherto immobile and obedient masses.

Great as the reverses over oil and in Iran have been, the agents who brought them about, compared to the United States in point of power and resources, are puny and insignificant; and furthermore, it could not possibly be argued that these were the instruments or puppets of another superpower which was effecting indirectly what it could not accomplish directly. If things have come to such a pass, it is, then, the policies which the United States chose to follow in the Middle East that must have been responsible.

The preponderance of the United States in Middle Eastern affairs is relatively recent, dating from not much before the end of World War II. It was Saudi Arabian oil, and later a global strategy made necessary by Soviet hostility, which led to U.S. involvement in the area. If, in the decades following the war, the U.S. attempted to play an imperial role in the Middle East, the manner in which it played this role was very different from that of Britain and France who had preceded the U.S. as dominant powers. These two empires did actually occupy and administer—for longer or shorter periods—Middle Eastern territories. This on the whole gave them a feel for the political realities of the region, and a grasp of what is necessary for gaining and keeping power. The U.S., on the other hand, never occupied or administered Middle Eastern territories. And what is more, it adopted, as a dominant power in the region, a paradoxically anti-imperial stance.

The character of this stance in the formation period of U.S. dominance has now been described and documented for us in Phillip J. Baram's excellent study, *The Department of State in the Middle East 1919-1945.** As Baram shows, anti-imperialism was a prejudice which foreign-service officers and departmental officials shared with their political superiors, whether in the State Department or the White House. So long as U.S. policy concerned itself only with safeguarding private and business interests in the region, and with insuring an open door for commercial enterprise, such sentiment was of little consequence. It was otherwise when the U.S. joined the war against the Axis, and needed to formulate a policy over strategic and political issues.

The formulation of this policy, Baram demonstrates, was heavily influenced and at times determined by the officials in the Near Eastern division and in the postwar planning division of the State Department, as well as by the views of foreign-services officers stationed in Arab capitals. The names of Wallace Murray, Paul Alling, Loy Henderson, George Wadsworth, William Eddy, Christina Grant, and William Yale are probably not very well-known to the general public, nor on examination do the originality, penetration, or sagacity of their views on the Middle East entitle them to any wide recognition. But by virtue of their official positions, their views enjoyed a privileged access to the highest political authorities who, even if they did not always agree with them,

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learned to see the Middle East and its problems, as well as the options open to the United States, in the light of the assumptions which over the years they encountered in the dispatches, minutes, and policy papers of these officials.

As representative of their outlook, we may instance Loy Henderson, appointed envoy to Iraq in 1943 and made director of the State Department's Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs in 1945. In the latter post, Henderson, Baram writes,

> turned out to be a vociferous foe of France in the Levant. His frequent memoranda were presented as dire and urgent philippics. French tactics, he inveighed, "are similar to those used by the Japanese in Manchukuo and by the Italians in Ethiopia," as well as to those "pursued by Russia in Eastern Europe." France disgraced the Allies, destroyed the confidence of little countries in great powers, and dealt a blow to the prestige of the infant UN organization and the recently convened San Francisco Conference. As for France's wish for preeminence in the Levant, none at all should be countenanced, said Henderson, even on the level of education, language, and culture. The French have no rights in the Levant, indeed had none even when the mandate was legal.

It is not only in retrospect that Henderson's stance may be queried. What purpose, one might have asked even in 1945, would be served by the anti-French policy so unhesitatingly advocated? Again, the parallel drawn among the Japanese in Manchuria, the Italians in Ethiopia, Russia in Eastern Europe, and the French in the Levant was so clearly exorbitant as to bring into serious question this official's judgment.

But Henderson's views were neither eccentric nor isolated. We learn, for instance, that in 1944 the State Department's interdivisional committee on Arab countries went so far in its eagerness to destroy the French position in the Levant as to recommend the nationalization of key French financial interests in Syria and Lebanon. Collaboration with the Soviet Union in the same righteous cause was also welcomed: "It was believed," Baram tells us, "that mutual anti-imperialism would put Moscow and Washington on the same side of the barricades against the French. That position in turn stood to enhance Soviet-American cooperation on other problems." What other problems? Puerile as it may sound, the belief of the State Department officials was that a Soviet-American gang-up against the French in the Levant would actually make the Soviets easier to deal with on the Polish question. But it was not only in the Levant that Soviet cooperation was desired. In Palestine, it was also believed, Soviet-British-American cooperation would strengthen "progressives" and "moderates" among both Arabs and Jews against the "extremists" on both sides, and lead to the creation of a binational state there. The misjudgment was just as grievous as in the Levant, and in both cases argues a failure alike to appraise the local situation, to fathom the character and aims of Soviet policy, and to think out United States interests and objectives in what was, admittedly, a new and unfamiliar situation. This intellectual failure stemmed as much from commitment to a naive anti-imperialist ideology as from inexperience plain and simple.

In the case of Saudi Arabia, however, ideology seemed to be the perfect handmaiden of American interests—interests which, although private, were fast becoming quite substantial and beginning even to have a bearing on political and strategic issues. Through a combination of shrewdness and good luck, American oil companies obtained a license to prospect in Saudi Arabia. They found extensive deposits and began exporting Saudi oil in 1938. When, some three years later, the United States joined the war and began to be politically active in the Middle East, the opportunity to displace the British as Ibn Saud's patron and protector began to seem literally golden. Anti-imperialist sentiment, no doubt genuine and deeply held, was also seen to be profitable.

It was now that there began that deliberate and continuous process of magnifying and aggrandizing Saudi Arabia—a poor, sparsely populated country dependent on foreign benevolence, where a form of Islam highly repugnant to the generality of Muslims held sway. Saudi Arabia's only importance was that it contained vast amounts of oil which, however, it was utterly incapable of extracting. It was then that there was inaugurated the style of respectful and awed flattery in which it became customary for the President of the United States to address the King of Saudi Arabia. This style is perhaps best exemplified by the locution "Great and Good Friend" with which Roosevelt's missives—drafted by the State Department—began. It was clearly believed that if only British influence could be eliminated, a warm and exclusive American-Saudi special relationship could be established and maintained. But, of course, one had to be vigilant against all imperialist incursions. Thus, during 1942, the idea was mooted that Ibn Saud might be helped to pay off his debts with Jewish funds secured through Zionist good offices, and that this would facilitate a settlement in Palestine. It is highly probable that the scheme would have come to nothing. But Wallace Murray, then head of the State Department's Division of Near Eastern Affairs, was greatly disturbed by it, and his extravagant language in rejecting it indicates not only the cast of his mind and his implicit assumptions, but also how great the umbrage he would take at anything which might threaten, however slightly, the intimate coziness of U.S.-Saudi relations. If the Jewish loan to Ibn Saud went through, he feared that "Zionists could extend their influence and activities outside Palestine," and this "appears to have the character of economic imperialism backed by international sanction." "Economic imperialism": the vulgar

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catchwords of Marxism strike an incongruous note in the memoranda of this high State Department official.

The attempt to edge out the British from Saudi Arabia and secure the exclusive friendship of Ibn Saud involved more than epistolary magniloquence. State Department officials were willing to recognize without question Ibn Saud's right to have a say in the settlement of the Palestine problem, and make far-reaching, albeit elastic, promises about it. Thus, in a letter of 1943 drafted in the Near Eastern division for Roosevelt's signature (which the President only slightly watered down), Ibn Saud was assured that no decision would be taken until after he had been "fully consulted and his agreement sought." This line of policy seems to have been adopted as a matter of course, as though it were axiomatic that Saudi Arabia—as well as other Arab states—had a right to a say in the affairs of Palestine.

This, indeed, was what the British had decided, as an act of policy, to assume in 1939. But it did not follow that the United States should automatically do likewise. There were cogent reasons for it not to do so. Palestine was a controversial issue in U.S. politics, and a wise policy would have seen to it that the two partners in policy-making—i.e., the Executive and the Senate—would act in harmony, or at least would not pull in different directions. In Palestine specifically, it was not evident that the cause of peace would be served or U.S. interests advanced if one side should be favored or supported at the expense of the other. Yet this was, as Baram shows, precisely the implicit assumption in State Department thinking. Writing of George Wadsworth, who served in various Middle Eastern posts before and during World War II, Baram remarks that he

> in effect misled his Arab hearers with his constant maximal pledges of American support and with his concomitant downgrading of any American interest in Zionism. Thus, whenever an American political leader endorsed a Jewish homeland in Palestine, the Arabs felt, variously, that it was mere electioneering, or that they were being betrayed by America, and/or that a Jewish conspiracy of wealth and the media in America had caused a reversal. For had not State Department officers like Wadsworth conditioned and assured them for years that American foreign policy was anti-Zionist? I would submit [Baram goes on to say] that the State Department's practice of such self-deception and deception of the Arabs—as if, in the making of American foreign policy, presidential, congressional, and domestic opinion counted for naught—was as much a cause of the Arabs' evolving hostility to the U.S. as the substantive fact that after the war American Presidents did support the right of a Jewish state to exist.

Baram speculates that this tendency by officials to play down or misinterpret inconvenient political declarations led James Byrnes, the Secretary of State in 1945, to issue an instruction to foreign-service posts in the Middle East that they "should not (repeat not) unless otherwise instructed attempt to comment on . . . or interpret . . . in any way" a statement made by President Truman favoring the immigration of Jewish refugees to Palestine.

BETWEEN 1945 and 1948, the United States became heavily involved in Middle Eastern politics and particularly in the Palestine conflict. In this conflict, a large number of parties and interests were deeply engaged, and it was by no means easy for a great power like the United States, with a multitude of interests and considerations to reconcile, to adopt a policy that would minimize damage, if not maximize gain. All the more difficult in that public opinion, Congress, the President, and the State Department held different views and varied them from time to time. A hesitant and indecisive stance was therefore to be expected, and it may be that, as Nadav Safran remarks in his *Israel: The Embattled Ally*,* such hesitation actually made the conflict worse, and that a clearer and more decisive policy would have prevented armed intervention by the Arab states. In the circumstances of 1947, partition was the most promising solution, and resolute public support for it by the United States and Britain would most probably have limited the immediate violence and avoided the long-drawn-out, festering, and ever-widening conflict. In the event, the U.S. first supported partition, then suddenly abandoned it at the last minute only to support it once more and recognize the provisional government of the new state of Israel. It is well known that partition was unpopular in the State Department, and that in recognizing Israel, Truman went against the advice of the officials dealing with the Middle East. One of these officials, William Eddy, who had served as envoy to Saudi Arabia and was a most fervent advocate of the Saudi connection, resigned from the State Department in protest. His gesture may be taken to symbolize widely-held sympathies and aversions which even now are still much in evidence.

The years following the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli war showed that the U.S., which was now a dominant power in the Middle East, had not really thought out a coherent policy—a policy which would articulate its principal interests in the region and relate them to the realities of the local situation. An obvious overriding interest was to maintain stability and, in the absence of an Arab-Israeli peace treaty, to prevent new hostility. In May 1950, a U.S.-Anglo-French Declaration was published pledging the signatories to regulate the supply of weapons to both sides, and affirming their opposition to any attempt to modify by force the boundaries laid down by the Arab-Israel armistice agreements. A chain is as weak as its weakest link, and the sequel proved that more

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than one link in this policy had as much solidity as melting butter.

For the policy of the tripartite declaration to work, the solidarity of its signatories had to remain strong and unimpaired. But the policies which the U.S. followed in the next few years were not calculated to preserve mutual confidence. The U.S. did not prove itself solicitous of British interests in Egypt. After the military coup d'état which brought Nasser to power, the U.S. strongly pressed the British to evacuate the Suez Canal Zone in exchange for some elastic and minimal, not to say meaningless, pledges by Egypt. This was presumably done in order to secure the good will and friendship of the Egyptian military regime—a regime which U.S. officials seriously believed would promote the welfare of the Egyptian people, and was therefore worth supporting. But if this was the calculation—and as a calculation it was manifestly faulty and absurd—then it did not jibe with the other line of policy which was followed at the same time. This was the policy that led to the Baghdad Pact, in which Iraq was given pride of place.

The Baghdad Pact policy proved both costly and unprofitable. Because it gave Iraq the primacy among Arab states, it alienated Nasser, who thereupon turned to the Soviets and made the famous arms deal of September 1955. The policy also alienated the French who believed that it would enable Iraq to dominate Syria which they looked upon as their protégé. Prohibitive as the cost of the Baghdad Pact policy proved to be, it yielded no profit. Perhaps the only way it could have done so was if the U.S. had given it unqualified support. But this the U.S. failed to do. Not only would it not join the pact, but its action undermined the power and prestige of Britain, the pact's principal Western member, and exposed the rulers of Iraq to a radical ideological onslaught which in the end ruined them, and put paid to both pact and policy. The Baghdad Pact policy made sense if Iraq was to be supported, and the machinations of its rival, Egypt, opposed and counteracted. It was, therefore, logical that the U.S. should deny Nasser financing for the Aswan dam. What made no sense at all was for the U.S. then to side with the Soviet Union and turn ferociously against its own NATO allies, Britain and France, when they took up Nasser's challenge and sought to bring him down in the Suez expedition. The actions of the U.S. in the autumn of 1956 ruined the British and French position in the Middle East, and left the U.S. singlehandedly to cope with a determined and activist Soviet Union in the region. The triumph which the U.S. procured for Nasser made the appeal of his radicalism irresistible in the Arab world. This eventually led to the downfall of the monarchy in Iraq, and to a civil war in Lebanon in which the U.S. had to intervene by landing marines in Beirut.

By its uncompromising opposition to the Suez expedition, the U.S. saved Nasser from a disaster. But no profit was obtained from this action which, as the sequel showed, proved very costly to the friends and allies of the U.S. and thus to the U.S. itself. As Nasser's savior and benefactor, the U.S. could have extracted from him a settlement of the conflict with Israel or at least insisted on conditions which would have made a renewal of hostilities very difficult. Sinai, for instance, could have been demilitarized, and unhindered passage through the Straits of Tiran made the subject of a formal treaty. As it was, this issue was simply covered by a private U.S. undertaking to Israel which, when put to the test in 1967, proved worthless. Again, Egyptian and Israeli armies were kept apart by a UN contingent, the presence of which depended strictly on Egyptian good will—though a unilateral attempt to qualify this unfettered discretion was made in a private memorandum by the tortuous and unreliable Dag Hammarskjöld. This too proved worthless when the crunch came in 1967.

A constitutional government subject to the periodic verdict of the electorate will, of course, now and again introduce changes, and sometimes far-reaching ones, in the direction of foreign policy, and such changes may give rise in an onlooker to puzzlement or even bewilderment. But how much more bewildering was the hurly-burly of U.S. Middle Eastern policy in the 1950's when the administration was in the hands of one political party, and foreign policy largely in the hands of one man —John Foster Dulles—and thus presumably enjoying the advantage of stability. The spectacle is alarming in its senselessness, the more so that such a great deal depended then—as it depends now—on the steadiness, sagacity, and tough-mindedness of American statesmen.

THE one consistent thread in U.S. policy toward the Middle East has been an abstract and arid "anti-imperialism," the benefits of which are problematic, not to say illusory, whether for the U.S. itself or for the region. The considerable political and economic support given to Nasser is a case in point. So far as the Egyptians are concerned, such support helped Nasser to inflict on them eighteen years of arbitrary government, a government which attempted to shackle and minutely control the activities of its subjects, and which engaged in expensive and catastrophic adventures abroad.

One act for which John F. Kennedy's administration was responsible again exemplifies this ill-considered tendency. In September 1962, a coup d'état to which the Egyptians were not strangers toppled the monarchy in Yemen. It was obvious from the beginning that the conspirators faced strong opposition within the country. In order to quell it, Nasser promptly sent an expeditionary force which, however, in five years of fighting (during which the Egyptians went so far as to use poison gas against pro-monarchical villages) proved unequal to the task of establishing his protégés se-

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curely in power. Nasser waged war in the Yemen not for the sake of the conspirators, but in order to gain a foothold in the Arabian peninsula from which to threaten and eventually overwhelm the Saudis, and lay his hands on their oil. It would not have been very difficult in 1962 to guess that this was indeed Nasser's object. Why then did the Kennedy administration hasten, as early as December 1962, to recognize the new regime? This act of recognition, taking place as it did when it was by no means clear that the conspirators were in control of the whole of Yemen, inevitably looked like a gesture of support for them and for Nasser's military intervention in the Arabian peninsula. As in the case of Suez in 1956, the advantages anticipated from such a policy remain utterly mysterious. Fortunately for U.S. interests, Nasser was finally unsuccessful in Yemen. But during the five years of Egyptian dominance, Yemen served as a base from which the British position in Aden and its hinterland was continually subverted and attacked. And this may have encouraged a Labor administration in Britain to give full rein to its traditional inclinations, and to abandon Aden as India and Palestine had been, abruptly and catastrophically, abandoned. The consequences of this action for Western interests were not long in manifesting themselves.

The British evacuation of Aden was followed shortly afterward by that of the Persian Gulf, and by 1971 there were hardly any Western bases or *points d'appui* in the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean, or the Persian Gulf. Furthermore, Aden was now a Soviet satellite from which the Soviet Union could extend its power and influence over neighboring territories and, as the war in Oman showed, a base from which subversive and "revolutionary" movements could be launched in the Arabian peninsula. The acts of policy which led to such outcomes were manifest blunders, as any prudent calculation would have beforehand indicated. We do not know, however, whether U.S. policy-makers viewed them as dangerous blunders or attempted to persuade British Prime Minister Harold Wilson or Edward Heath (who followed in Mr. Wilson's footsteps) of the impolicy of their actions. What is known is that after the departure of the British, Iran and Saudi Arabia came to be looked upon by the U.S. as the pillars of Western defense in the region. Enormous amounts of sophisticated arms and equipment were supplied to them, and in the case of Saudi Arabia, they continue to be supplied.

The consequences of such a policy do not seem to have been seriously considered. Iran and Saudi Arabia could by no stretch of the imagination be thought capable of effectively using these arms or acting as the proxy of the U.S. and its allies in facing the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the fact that these arms were supplied and go on being supplied in order to pay for oil compounds the miscalculations and increases the dangers. Arms supplied in order to cover a deficit in the balance of payments are not the same as arms supplied in support of a policy or a strategy. Arms supplied to pay for oil become a commodity like any other—the more sold, the better; and the use made of them cannot be controlled in the same way as when arms are supplied in pursuance of a political objective. Nor is there a prospect of the effective demand for arms being exhausted, since its purchasers are free to increase at will the price they charge for oil, and thus to increase the burden of the tribute which they exact from consumers.

This state of affairs—i.e., the steady erosion of the U.S. and Western positions in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the Persian Gulf; the ability of the oil producers to exact from their customers whatever price they please; and the accumulation of powerful weapons in the hands of unstable and unreliable governments over whose actions little or no control is possible—is of the essence of the Middle Eastern problem as it confronts the U.S. These conditions form the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict—a conflict which, from the vantage point of the outside powers involved, is decidedly less significant than its context. In his recently published *Decade of Decisions: American Policy Toward the Arab-Israeli Conflict 1967-1976*,* William B. Quandt recognizes the importance of these issues for his subject, but the recognition remains formal and perfunctory. The reader gets little sense of the course of policy-making, of the way in which the larger strategic considerations mesh with the daily concerns arising out of sudden emergencies, or from the ebb and flow of bargaining and negotiation. Quandt's account is thus somewhat arid and sketchy. The reason is not far to seek: the vigor and liveliness of a diplomatic and political narrative lie in its detail—the debate over alternatives, the unexpected somersaults in policy, the hedging and the trimming, the cut-and-thrust of negotiation, the influence of personality, and the compulsion of circumstances. It is not Quandt's fault if the evidence on which a detailed narrative can be based is not yet available. But because of this lack, we come to feel that even though all that Quandt says about the "decade of decisions" may be true, he is not in a position to show us that it is true and, more important, in what manner exactly what he states to have taken place did take place.

For instance, the book includes a chapter on the crisis of September 1970 in Jordan, when Jordanian forces clashed with and defeated the PLO, and when in an attempt to avert this defeat the Syrians moved troops across the Syrian-Jordanian border and actually occupied the town of Irbid. Hussein appealed for help and the U.S., fearing the consequences of his overthrow, decided on a show of force, and was even prepared to have Israel intervene against the Syrian troops in Jordan

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with air strikes and, if need be, with ground troops as well. The Syrians then retreated behind their border and the crisis came to an end.

So far so good. But Quandt has criticisms to make of U.S. policy. We are told that the Americans misinterpreted the Syrian invasion, overemphasizing the Soviet role and minimizing the degree to which it grew out of internal Syrian politics. We are also told that Nixon and Kissinger were caught "in a perceptual trap of their own making" which led them to ignore "regional trends" and to misjudge "the very forces that would lead within three years to a much more dangerous outbreak of war in October 1973." These are self-assured statements about matters concerning which we know very little indeed. For in the absence of evidence—which Quandt does not supply—who can say with any certainty what exactly the motives and actions were of such secretive autocracies as the Syrian Baathist regime and the Soviet Union?

Furthermore, even granting that the invasion of Jordanian territory "grew out of internal Syrian politics," does this make the threat to the Jordanian regime any less serious, or the Soviets deriving advantage from its collapse any less of a possibility? And before deciding that Nixon and Kissinger were the unwitting and maladroit victims of a self-devised "perceptual trap," ought we not to know what evidence they had at their disposal, how they interpreted it, and what their calculations were? What may not be gainsaid is that the U.S. succeeded in 1970 in checkmating the Syrians. But, says Quandt, this success laid the foundations of failure in October 1973. A conclusion of this kind is either historical or it is nothing. A historical conclusion, however, has to be the outcome of a complex chain of evidence and inference which would establish how, from September 1970 to October 1973, the events which happened and the decisions which were taken "culminated" in the Yom Kippur War. The book provides neither evidence nor inference. It may be, of course, that Quandt's judgment is correct, but for the reader its correctness is accidental—no more than an informed or perhaps merely plausible guess or a speculative hunch. One could also imagine speculations equally plausible leading to quite different conclusions: as, for instance, that a different policy toward the Syrian-Jordanian conflict in 1970 would still not have prevented a general Arab-Israeli war and might even have hastened it; or that the October 1973 war might not have taken place but for a failure of judgment in Israel and the U.S. about Egyptian-Syrian intentions in the days immediately preceding its outbreak.

QUANDT is equally critical of U.S. policy in the aftermath of the October war. Kissinger's step-by-step diplomacy "rates high as a tactic but fails to convey any sense of long-term purpose"; he "knew what he wanted to avoid better than he knew what positive goals he might be able to achieve"; he had "a blind spot toward the Palestinian issue," and "geared much of his diplomacy to trying to circumvent this crucial issue, to putting off the moment of truth, to weakening the appeal of the Palestinian movement, all the while hoping that some alternative would appear." Here, too, in the absence of detailed evidence about Kissinger's calculations and actions and their day-to-day political and diplomatic context, we are quite at a loss to judge the truth of these seemingly historical assertions. Taken not as historical judgments but as prescriptions for future policy, these assertions are open to all kinds of objections. It is by no means obvious that "the Palestinian dimension" is the "heart" of the Arab-Israeli conflict: it could, on the contrary, be argued that it is the least important part of it. Again, it is by no means obvious that a "step-by-step diplomacy" is either inferior to the pursuit of a grand and comprehensive scheme, or indeed that it precludes such a scheme. It is also not easy to see that the search for "positive goals" is manifestly superior to the avoidance of undesirable outcomes: sufficient unto the day, a statesman might with justice say, is the evil thereof.

The maxims of policy which Quandt recommends are thus on a perfect equality with their opposites. They are as likely to be untrue and unhelpful as to be true and helpful. Their purpose in his book, however, is clear. It is to recommend and support a particular policy for dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict, the policy associated with the so-called Brookings Report which Quandt helped to draw up. There is no need here to rehearse once more the faults of appreciation and judgment which mar this document.* Suffice it to say that if there has been movement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, it has come from a direction not looked for in the Brookings Report, with its hankering after a "comprehensive" settlement, and not expected by the administration which began by adopting its recipes. In the closing pages of his work, Quandt has pointed up and made more specific the Brookings recommendations. He looks, for instance, to a coalition of Arab regimes including Egypt, Syria, and Saudi Arabia, possibly together with Jordan, the Palestinians, and—for good measure—"perhaps even Algeria" to make peace with Israel. Long experience has shown such a coalition for such a purpose to be unobtainable. To have any hope of success, statesmanship must move with and not against the grain. A suggestion of this kind, in seeking the unattainable, in moving against the grain of Middle Eastern conditions, shows itself to inhabit the same arid region of abstraction and fancy into which U.S. foreign policy has been all too prone, at times, to seek refuge.

*They are examined in my article "How to (and How Not to) Seek Peace in the Middle East," *Encounter*, May 1978.

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Sociobiology & Its Critics

Charles Frankel

THE wheel of intellectual fashion turns and returns in universities—behaviorism, eugenics, the New History, the New Criticism, pragmatism, Marxism, logical positivism, existentialism, operant conditioning, revisionist history, structuralism. Yet something persists through the fashions and affects the career of ideas both substantial and insubstantial. It is the apparently inextinguishable capacity of large numbers of people in the academic community, including some of its most seasoned citizens, to treat each new wind of doctrine as though it had come to blow the world clean of its superstitions and stupidities. Our citadels of reason stand alongside certain fundamentalist sects in their susceptibility to the hope that, through some new revelation of truth, human nature can be freed of its corruptions and society made over as it was intended to be.

Yet universities, of course, have not simply been the homes of intellectual crazes. They have generated ideas which really have been revolutionary, which have altered human thinking and changed the face of the world, and which have done so not because they have fed people's passions or satisfied their will to believe, but because they have shown a genuine staying power in the face of arguments and evidence. The recurrent problem when each new intellectual "breakthrough" is announced is to determine whether it represents just another bout of intellectual feverishness or something more important.

Once more an idea has emerged which invites such scrutiny. It is incorporated in a discipline which has acquired the name of sociobiology, and is concerned with the study of the genetic basis of social behavior in insects, animals, and *homo sapiens*. The discipline carries the implication that mankind's social institutions and mores are the product not simply of tradition, historical accident, ideology, or the machinations of ruling classes, but of dispositions and drives of the human animal that have developed in the process of biological evolution and belong to the species' genetic heritage. The idea is hardly new. It can be found in the Greek philosophers. In its broad outlines it accords, indeed, with the everyday gleanings of common sense. Human beings are born physically helpless and remain for relatively long periods physically weak; they are driven by imperious sexual urges which become manifest at predictable stages of their development; they grow beards and breasts with no thought or decision of their own, enjoy a period of vigor, and then age and die. All societies take account of such facts in their established patterns of life, and it is the ubiquity of such facts that enables human beings sometimes to understand one another across the barriers of different cultures, languages, and religions.

The very banality of these considerations would lead one to suppose that the advent of sociobiology, which seeks to extend our knowledge of the way such biological facts affect social institutions, would have been taken in stride as a natural expression of human curiosity and the desire for self-knowledge. On the contrary, however, sociobiology has caused a considerable commotion. It has come to birth in a culture impregnated with a sense of historical relativities, deeply aware of ethnic diversity and the plasticity of human behavior, and influenced by the hope that, through the proper manipulation of the human environment, violence, poverty, and injustice can be reduced and perhaps abolished. Sociobiology has broken upon the world, therefore, not simply as an event in science but as a political and ideological *cause célèbre*.

The key book in the charting of this new discipline is *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*,* by Edward O. Wilson, professor of science and curator of entomology at Harvard. On its appearance it was immediately attacked as a thinly disguised re-

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* Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1975.

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vival of Spencerian rugged individualism, as a prescription for technocratic social engineering, as a defense of inequality and male chauvinism, as a restatement of racist doctrine, and as a contemporary version of the ideas which led to the gas chambers of Nazi Germany.*

One group of critics put forth this typical, though comparatively modulated, judgment:

> We submit that, despite its bold theoretical poses, Wilson's *Sociobiology* embodies a form of social prophecy which coheres comfortably with the dynamics of modern market societies. It offers, under the guise of scientific objectivity, an invitation to cultivate what Wilson calls a "philosophical ease" toward the unfolding of contemporary human affairs. We find ourselves unable to maintain the ease required to accept discrimination, militarism, and social injustice as natural and inevitable reflections of some vast and insensate sociobiological scheme of things.†

In support of attacks like these, Wilson's departmental colleague at Harvard, Richard Lewontin, himself a distinguished biologist, observed decorously: "Wilson, like most scientists, expects to be able to put out a lot of bullshit about society and not get taken up on it." Wilson, surprised by the vitriolic character of the attacks upon his work, replied with charges of "academic vigilantism," and he has been busy clarifying and explaining his views ever since.

Writing in *Newsweek* in the summer of 1976, at the height of these quarrels about sociobiology, a more detached observer, the Nobel laureate economist Paul Samuelson, remarked: "How do you keep distinct a Shockley from a Wilson? A Hitler from a Huxley? . . . To survive in the jungles of intellectuals, the sociobiologist had best tread softly in the zones of race and sex."

Is sociobiology another piece of scientific charlatanry? Wilson has considerable standing in the scientific community, and he has brought an immense amount of empirical data together in support of his views. For these reasons alone it is important to ask this question. And sociobiology is important for more than what it may say or imply about topics like social inequality or the role of women, which are at the center of attention at the present moment. It carries implications for the future of scientific inquiry, and for age-old questions about the role of human intelligence and will, the meaning of ethical principles, and the nature and possibilities of mankind. What, then, are its credentials and significance?

II

The reader of the angry literature that has grown up around sociobiology will inevitably be surprised if he turns to the book that has been at the center of all the excitement. Edward Wilson's *Sociobiology*, for the most part, is an austerely scientific work. It is long, careful, full of definitions and the studious analysis of alternative explanations of the phenomena under consideration. It does not entirely neglect social and moral issues of current concern, but its focus is overwhelmingly on the forms of social behavior to be found in insects, birds, and animals. And while the information it presents is detailed, fascinating, and often startling, Wilson is extremely cautious about the generalizations he offers, and at many points his arguments depend on mathematical reasoning that can be followed only by specialists.

Over the course of many generations, as Wilson shows with the help of hundreds of examples, insect and animal societies change in various ways. Periods of fertility become longer or shorter, for example. The ratios of old to young alter. The distribution of food or work or mating functions changes in pattern. The relationship of an animal population to the environment, or to other species, undergoes modifications, sometimes profound. The principal background of *Sociobiology* lies in the immense progress that has been achieved in recent research into the conditions leading to such evolutionary changes in the character, composition, and behavior of insect and animal populations.

Wilson began as a student of entomology. His best known work before he published *Sociobiology* was *The Insect Societies* (1971). At the conclusion of that book, he speculated that the same principles of population biology and comparative zoology that had worked so well in explaining the biological origins and functions of the rigid social systems of insects could be applied point by point to vertebrate animals. *Sociobiology* was the effort to give shape to this idea; it emerged as a book bringing vast and diversified bodies of empirical research together, synthesizing them, and delineating the outlines of a new discipline with an ambitious agenda of inquiry. Sociobiology, as Wilson defines it, is "the systematic study of the biological basis of all social behavior." For the present, its focus is on animal societies, but the discipline, he emphasizes, is also concerned with the social behavior of early man and with the social organization of the simpler human societies still in existence.

Wilson pursues this program, giving his chief attention to insect and animal behavior, with subtlety and with an extraordinary mastery of detail. The landscape he puts before us is an arresting one. It brings back and deepens the Darwinian shock. We are reminded yet again of the continuity between man and the animals; but we are reminded not only of the animal in man but of the degree to which animals have traits that we are conventionally disposed to call human. Deer, wolves, chimpanzees, and countless other species live inside social systems that have characteristics

* See *The Sociobiology Debate: Readings on Ethical and Scientific Issues*, edited by Arthur L. Caplan, Harper & Row, 1978.

† From the Letters section of *Science* 192 (April 30, 1976). For the full text, see Caplan ed., *op. cit.*

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human beings can recognize, such as kinship relations, methods of communication, division of labor, hierarchical class structures, manners of courtship, sibling rivalries, differential treatment of members and non-members of the group, dominance and surrender rituals, and specific mixtures of competition and cooperation in the division of food, living space, and mates.

Moreover, animals change their ways of behaving in response to changes in their social environment even as human beings do. Indeed, it is worth noting, since Wilson has been accused of an excessive emphasis on the genetic factors in human behavior, that he warns, very early in *Sociobiology*, against hasty generalizations about the predetermined genetic fixity of animal conduct. Thus, aggressive encounters between adult hippopotami are rare when the population density is low to moderate, but when the conditions of hippopotamus life grow crowded, hippopotamus males have been known to fight viciously. Similarly, the availability and quality of food affect behavior. Well-fed honey-bee colonies will be tolerant of intruding workers from nearby hives, but if these colonies go without food for several days they attack intruders at the nest entrance.

Nor are external conditions like population density and the availability of food supply the only causes of variation in animal social behavior. Inventions, technology, outstanding individuals also make a difference. Wilson presents the case of the female monkey "genius" named Imo, a member of the troup of macaques on the Japanese island of Koshima, who, at the age of eighteen months, invented potato-washing in the sea, and at the age of four years invented a flotation method of separating wheat grains from sand. Both techniques were adopted by her community.

Yet, though animal social behavior, particularly in the higher vertebrates, clearly covers a wide range of possibilities which are affected by environmental factors or differences in social "tradition" (the word is Wilson's), it is also plain that much of this behavior falls within preestablished genetic scales of behavior. Under pressures of population density, for example, hippopotami fight, but under similar pressures there are bird populations that become more cooperative, the females joining in little nest communities and raising their young together. The program of sociobiology, as Wilson sees it, is to investigate the evolutionary processes affecting the transmission and modification of such genetic constraints. Carried far enough, such a program, he hopes, can throw vast new light not only on the evolution of the non-human world but on the development of the human.

Whether this hope is well founded is a question that we must consider. But it is important to recognize that Wilson's basic contribution, if contribution it be, has been to the science of biology, and that the materials he has explored and brought together have not been presented with the same guiding intentions as have gone into many other recent books with a background in early human anthropology and in what is known as animal ethology. The indignation and hostility with which Wilson's *Sociobiology* has been received are explicable in part by the fact that a biologist of reputation, armed with information formidable in its magnitude and not easily contestable in its quality, has seemed to enter an ideological contest which has been going on for some time —and, worse still, he has taken the "wrong" side. But Wilson himself goes to much trouble in *Sociobiology* to distinguish his effort from that of others with whom there might be a temptation to compare it.

For something like two decades a series of books has appeared stressing the genetic origins of current institutions and social problems. The best known, probably, have been Robert Ardrey's *The Territorial Imperative*, Desmond Morris's *The Naked Ape*, Konrad Lorenz's *On Aggression*, and *The Imperial Animal*, written by two young scholars named, appropriately, Lionel Tiger and Robin Fox. Some of the authors of these books have had distinguished reputations as scientists, and all have drawn on research into the social behavior of animals and early humans, but these books have nevertheless been written, as their authors would concede, with current political and social preoccupations mainly in mind. Their common thesis has been that fundamental aspects of human behavior today are the results of evolutionary natural selection in the distant past, the genetic inheritance from the long period in which the human species preserved itself in hunting packs. The needs or official professions of our era push us to abstention from violence, to mutual cooperation, to equality. But needs of our bodies and minds which are as biologically rooted as our sexual drives push us to aggression and predatory behavior.

The authors of some of these books have said that they are trying to define a problem and not to declare it insoluble. Predictably enough, however, the message of these books has been interpreted as conservative or reactionary: individual and group conflict, social stratification, role differentiation based on sex, the recourse to violence, are all innate, and not the consequences of the social environment. Predictably, too, there have been answering cries from anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists. Erich Fromm, to take an example, has characterized Lorenz's views as "social and moral Darwinism . . . a romantic, nationalistic paganism." There have been ripostes as well from other students, professional and amateur, of animal and human evolution. Thus, Elaine Morgan, in *The Descent of Woman* (1971), a book adopted by the Book-of-the-Month Club, has argued that, for a long moment in the past, the ancestors of the human race were forced back into the waters, and that it was during that period of

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amphibious existence that the human race developed its distinctive characteristics, such as hairlessness, sensitive fingers, and the capacity to stand erect. The period during which early humans hunted and gathered food in packs, when the phenomenon of role differentiation based on sex and male dominance appeared, is therefore of secondary importance, contributing little to the biological heritage of the species. From these premises, Miss Morgan draws the conclusion that the roles traditionally assigned to women in society are distortions of the natural order of things.

In comparison with the books by Lorenz or by Tiger and Fox, Miss Morgan's is an obvious confection. Nevertheless, all these books* have been written as direct contributions to the debate over issues which are at the center today of heated political and ideological disagreement. The situation is different in the case of Wilson's *Sociobiology*. Whatever its political or moral implications—and Wilson would be the last to deny that it has these—the central excitement in it has to do with scientific theory. The book has a controlling vision, but it is of a new scientific synthesis and not of a new establishment of reason on the political scene.

Sociobiology represents, in Wilson's view, one prong of the two-pronged effort of modern biology to integrate the insights of Darwinian theory at a new level of comprehensiveness and precision. At one extreme molecular biology, neurophysiology, and adjacent disciplines like endocrinology now seek to explain, at the microscopic level, the mechanisms of genetic inheritance and programming. At the other extreme, at the macroscopic level, sociobiology, as Wilson sees it, seeks to explain the evolution of social behavior in terms, first, of the growth and age structure of whole animal populations, and in terms, second, of their genetic constitution. In Wilson's words:

> The formulation of a theory of sociobiology constitutes, in my opinion, one of the great manageable problems of biology for the next twenty or thirty years. . . . The principal goal of a general theory of sociobiology should be an ability to predict features of social organization from a knowledge of these population parameters combined with information on the behavioral constraints imposed by the genetic constitution of the species.

In short, Wilson puts an extraordinary vista before us. The Darwinian theory of evolution, though it offers an organizing principle to explain why plants and animals in their immense diversity have the characteristics that they do, is not a deductive system, nor does it permit us either to predict future developments or to retrodict the past. It is unlike Newton's laws, which, for example, allow us, on the basis of information about the present positions of the planets, to deduce their past and future positions. If Wilson's program is successful, the Darwinian theory will have been transformed into something closer to the Newtonian.

He is in his own way, then, an advocate and a visionary. But he belongs in the tradition not of Marx or Herbert Spencer but of Descartes. His vision is of a comprehensive new science, organized with mathematical rigor, that will unify fields of inquiry hitherto separate, and replace gross generalizations with precise laws. And in one respect he goes beyond Descartes. He also believes that human traits can be brought within the framework of these laws.

Is THIS vision a pipe dream? All depends on whether the "general theory of sociobiology," whose formulation Wilson regards as a "manageable" problem in the next twenty or thirty years, really is found. As of now, we do not have that theory; we have only Wilson's trumpet call to begin the hunt for it.

Further, since he believes that the goal of such a theory is "to predict features of social organization," it is important to be clear about the content of that notoriously ambiguous word, "prediction." Changes in social organization are not occurrences in closed, isolated systems of events; they are changes in systems open to external disturbance. In the case of animal societies, for example, changes introduced by human inventions and projects produce vast perturbations which are not foreseeable from the standpoint of population genetics or long-term ecological projections. "Predictions" about such societies, therefore, can only say, at best, that under given circumstances, which may or may not occur, such and such effects will follow. And in the case of human social behavior the difficulties in the way of direct prediction are even more formidable. No biological or sociological theory, for example, could have predicted in 1960 that the Beatles would come along, with all the influence they exercised on manners, tastes, and values. Human sentiments may move along a predictable range—love, hate, loyalty, envy, the rest—but not their targets or contexts; and still less can we predict the content of the new ideas that will move us or the precise nature of the inventions that will change economic and social relations. After all, if we could predict them we would already have them in our possession.

Wilson, judged by his total performance, is not unaware of considerations such as these. It seems reasonable to suppose, therefore, that he does not intend sociobiology to be a new form of astrology, and that all he has in mind is a theory that will help in the exploration of major alternative possibilities of human development, the determination of their limits, and the projection in a rough way of their costs. Although sociobiology has become entwined with the history of political and ideological controversy, it should be judged in the first

* See also *The Human Imperative*, by Alexander Alland, Columbia University Press, 1972, and *The Use and Abuse of Biology*, by Marshall Sahlins, University of Michigan Press, 1976.

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place as a contribution to science. In these terms, Wilson's synthesis of existing knowledge is an unusual achievement, and the lines of inquiry which he charts for the future promise considerable additions to human knowledge.

There is an arc in the history of many sciences. When they reach a certain point in their early development, the possibility appears of a theory that will pull the bits and pieces of new knowledge together and that will provide the basis for the reconstruction of human thinking more generally. Euclid had this effect on the Greeks, and Descartes was the spokesman for such a vision of mathematical physics. Later, when a science's achievements have become familiar and the first enthusiasm about it has cooled, critical philosophers emerge, like Aristotle or Kant, to call attention to its limits. Yet the early visionaries, the prophets of a new dispensation of knowledge, serve a crucial purpose. Although the possibilities they envisage may lie, in their totality, beyond attainment, the prophets see that there are things to be accomplished which their contemporaries do not; and many of these things are accomplished. There is an undeniable air of Cartesian optimism in Wilson's work, and sociobiology may well fall short of the ambitious intellectual goals he sets for it. Spurred by such goals, however, it is likely to achieve considerably more than it would without them.

Nevertheless, Wilson must bear a bit of the blame for the fact that the supposed ideological implications of his work have deflected attention from the excitement it offers as an exercise in science. He began *Sociobiology* with a short, speculative chapter called, provocatively, "The Morality of the Gene," in which he discussed such matters as Albert Camus on suicide, the origins of altruism, and the nature of ethical principles. And he ended his book with a chapter in which he speculated on the genetic sources of religion, ethics, and the arts, talked about the future of man, and permitted himself to make statements like the following:

> The transition . . . to fundamental theory in sociology must await a full, neuronal explanation of the human brain. Only when the machinery can be torn down on paper at the level of the cell and put together again will the properties of emotion and ethical judgment come clear. . . . Skinner's dream of a culture predesigned for happiness will surely have to wait for the new neurobiology. A genetically accurate and hence completely fair code of ethics must also wait.

In this chapter he speaks of the inevitability in the next century of a "planned society," talks of the genetic constraints which would have to be understood and overcome, and begins his final paragraph with a sentence that would fit with no difficulty in the books of Ardrey and other popular ethologists: "It seems that our autocatalytic social evolution has locked us into a particular course which the early hominids still within us may not welcome." He has not been able to get off the hook ever since, and his latest book, *On Human Nature*,* for which he has been awarded a Pulitzer Prize, is still another effort to clarify and explain his views.

Sociobiology, as Wilson has formulated it, in fact consists of a core doctrine—a scientific program for a "new synthesis" of evolutionary ideas—and a penumbra of logically independent doctrines of quite another sort. The central one is a program for the unification of biology, the social sciences, and the humanities. It is based on a classic form of philosophical materialism and is joined to a version of what used to be called evolutionary ethics. Almost as an appendix, Wilson also offers a set of vague opinions about current social problems.

WHAT is it that Wilson means when he argues that sociobiology offers a basis for the unification of biology, the social sciences, and the humanities? In *On Human Nature*, he sets forth his basic position as follows:

> The core of scientific materialism is the evolutionary epic. Let me repeat its minimum claims: that the laws of the physical sciences are consistent with those of the biological and social sciences and can be linked in chains of causal explanation; that life and mind have a physical basis; that the world as we know it has evolved from earlier worlds obedient to the same laws; and that the visible universe today is everywhere subject to these materialist explanations.

Formulated in these broad terms, Wilson's position raises two questions. Why would anyone disagree? And why does Wilson attach such important implications to these propositions, and think that they serve as the basis for the unification of the natural and social sciences and the humanities? For it would be surprising if the laws of economics violated the laws of physics, and it would be hard for anyone but believers in the literal truth of miracles to deny the universal reign of natural laws. Nor would anyone who accepts the finality of death and sees no evidence for the existence of disembodied spirits have trouble conceding that "life and mind have a physical basis." Wilson calls this set of beliefs "scientific naturalism" or "materialism," and his manner of presenting them suggests that he regards them as radical and controversial. But they are the generally held views of educated people who take the findings of modern science to be too well corroborated to permit any other point of departure for their reflections on man and his place in nature.

In fact, they are old beliefs which long antedate the rise of modern sciences. They were affirmed by Democritus and Lucretius, and they lurk behind the tortured questions raised in the Book of Job about the contrast between this morally unintelligible world and the presumed benevolence of its

* Harvard University Press, 260 pp., $12.50.

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Creator. Science has not created these beliefs. It has merely fortified them and helped to give them more general currency.

To be sure, Wilson is not wrong to think they are important and have a biting edge. They undercut ideas to which large parts of the human race remain passionately attached, and when they are used as a basis for the study and evaluation of humanity's emergence, doings, and sufferings, they destroy or reshape habits of mind long enshrined. If, for example, one accepts these propositions which Wilson enunciates, one will not believe that there are fundamental discontinuities or "dualisms" separating man from the rest of nature, and one will hesitate to use a logic in the study of human beings wholly different from that which we use to study the domains of physics or biology. In this sense, the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities are "unified."

But Wilson attaches greater importance to these propositions even than this. He thinks them more radical in their implications, and more contrary to views that are widely held, because he reads a meaning into them which, in my opinion, they do not and cannot have. In *On Human Nature*, Wilson calls for a deeper and more courageous examination of human nature that combines the findings of biology with those of the social sciences, and he spells out what he means immediately: "The mind," he says, "will be more precisely explained as an epiphenomenon of the neuronal machinery of the brain." Similarly, on the opening page of *Sociobiology* he preaches a sermon to philosophers of ethics:

> The emotional control centers in the hypothalamus and limbic system of the brain . . . flood our consciousness with all the emotions . . . that are consulted by ethical philosophers who wish to intuit the standards of good and evil. What, we are then compelled to ask, made the hypothalamus and limbic system? They evolved by natural selection. That simple biological statement must be pursued to explain ethics and ethical philosophers, if not epistemology and epistemologists, at all depths.

In short, Wilson's "scientific materialism" is a materialism of a quite special kind. It is a traditional form of reductive materialism. He presents us with more than the incontestable view that there are physical and biological conditions for our ideas and ethical reflections. He also implies that if we have adequate knowledge of the former, we can deduce the latter. And he apparently believes that this causal explanation of our thoughts and emotions will be a sufficient basis as well for their normative appraisal. Happily, although Wilson paints the outlines of this position boldly, he repeatedly veers away from its consequences. Nevertheless, it is the source of great confusion.

THERE is a fairly simple logical reason why the social sciences and the humanities cannot be "unified" with biology in the terms that Wilson apparently contemplates. Propositions about the hypothalamus and the limbic system do not contain terms like "love," "hate," "good," or "bad." They cannot, therefore, be the only premises we need to produce psychological or moral statements containing such terms. Nor can we do without such terms, for they have been developed to deal with discernible aspects and qualities of human experience which the languages of molecular biology and biochemistry cannot adequately characterize. It is an old notion that a belief in the universal reign of physical laws implies that all explanations must be in the vocabulary of the natural sciences. To be sure, if the necessary physical conditions were not present, human beings would not have the plans, projects, ideas, and emotions that they do. These are, in this sense, physical events, and proper objects of study by the natural sciences. Yet this does not imply that they cannot also be studied quite independently of the natural sciences, or that nothing of significance will be revealed by such independent study.

Consider, for example, the ideas in Wilson's book, which presumably could be connected, if we had the requisite theoretical and practical information, to neuronal events in his brain cells. Would such an explanation of the physiological and chemical goings-on inside Wilson's head tell us anything about the logical content or merits of these ideas, or their relationship to the past and future of biological research, or their possible utility in assessing different forms of social organization? And when he says that "the mind . . . is an epiphenomenon of the neuronal machinery of the brain," does he mean to say that his ideas, even if they do not in themselves have characteristics such as spatial extension or mass, cannot be said to be the causes of anything in their own right? In a normal sense of the word "cause," they have demonstrably caused, for example, other people's anger. We could presumably trace the causal sequence leading to this anger through the glandular systems of Wilson's critics, but such an effort would tell us nothing about what is most pertinent—the particular extent of his ideas, the specific character of his critics' beliefs, and the distinctive quality of that emotion known as "anger." For this word does not have a synonym in the language of neurons, which describes only its physical conditions. It is the name for a recognizable feeling, aroused by and directed toward objects, persons, or ideas describable only in common-sense language and not in the language of neurophysiology.

We have normal modes of thinking and speaking about phenomena of human life like books, promises, marriage, constitutions, schools, the experience of listening to music, the rules and interests of the scientific community. Intelligible statements, capable of being called true or false, sensible or foolish, discerning or obtuse, can be made in these modes. If "scientific materialism" means

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that the progress of science will expose such modes of thinking and speaking as superstitions, then it proposes to abandon irreplaceable forms of responsible discourse on which much human knowledge and wisdom are founded. Happily, however, a belief that man is part of physical nature does not carry this logical implication. Indeed, if it did, it would be a self-vitiating belief.

If Wilson's conception of "scientific materialism" is out of synchronization with the language and perspectives of ordinary life, the same, I think, is true of his ethical philosophy. Our ethical principles are to be appraised in the light of their consequences for the human gene pool. Such an appraisal, to the extent that we are capable of making it, is of course important, but it is surely not the only relevant test of moral principles or social policies. A developed civilization has enterprises too varied and requirements too complex to permit any single set of considerations, even genetic ones, to monopolize moral judgment. Even if we knew more than we do about the actual effects of the moral ideas we employ on the future genetic constitution of the race, we could still not say what a *desirable* genetic result would be without invoking, in addition to this scientific information, an independent framework of social and moral norms. Although Wilson is obviously aware of the long debate over the propriety of using purely biological norms as a basis for ethics, I am not persuaded that his own version of evolutionary ethics is an improvement over 19th-century versions.

Indeed, it is bogged down in some old 19th-century issues. The central problem of sociobiology, he tells us, is how the individual organism, genetically predisposed to struggle for survival, can also carry "altruistic" genes that dispose it to sacrifice its individual existence for the group. This problem concerned Darwin, and Wilson's solution, though more elaborately developed, is not substantially different: kin-bonding is so important for survival that the genes that make for strong kin bonds and individual self-sacrifice tend to come through the evolutionary filter and to persist. But to argue that this is the "central" problem of sociobiology is to take it for granted that the polarity of individual vs. society is the inevitable place to begin when one tries to understand animal or human behavior. If nothing else, the data accumulated by Wilson himself about the inbred social orientation of the higher primates should cast doubt on the intellectual utility of such a point of departure. It owes more, it seems to me, to the old social-contract metaphor, now revived, than to materials intrinsic to the story of evolution.

Further, Wilson's materialism, which leads him, when speaking of human thoughts and feelings, to deflate them into "epiphenomena," leads him, when using moral terms like "altruism," to inflate them into words without cash value. The insect killed by the queen of the colony as it fertilizes her eggs is, in Wilson's parlance, behaving "altruistically." From that behavior to the conduct of the religious martyr or the battlefield hero we have, if we use his vocabulary, a single unbroken spectrum of individual self-sacrifice for the good of the community. But when "altruism" is used indifferently to characterize unconscious instinctual behavior and voluntary sacrifice by a creature conscious of the nature of death, it is not scientific information or a naturalistic philosophical perspective that we are receiving. It is, I fear, an object lesson in the abuse of words.

III

Yet these criticisms of the philosophical adornments which Wilson has added to his scientific endeavor still leave a central issue to be examined. When a wolf grovels before his conqueror or a peacock shows his feathers to a hen, they are not simply following a social custom. They are doing what they do as a result of natural selection and the transmission to them of certain biologically inherited traits. And human beings, too, grovel and strut and show their feathers. So the great question arises: what proportion of human behavior is physiological and genetic in its causes? How much of what we commonly explain as a product of history and convention, like monogamous marriage, private property, or organized warfare, is in reality bone of our bones and flesh of our flesh, and not subject to change except with extraordinary effort and unpredictable consequences?

This is the question which joins sociobiological research to moral and social concerns that are in the forefront of the contemporary consciousness. Yet, oddly enough, when Wilson addresses this question, his answers are usually so guarded or vague, or so fundamentally in accord with the dominant conventions, that it is a bit of a mystery why his critics have been so indignant. On the "nature-vs.-nurture" controversy, Wilson writes: "The evidence is strong that almost all differences between human societies are based on learning and social conditioning rather than heredity. And yet perhaps not quite all." On the social meaning of sex differences, he says:

> Here is what I believe the evidence shows: modest genetic differences exist between the sexes; the behavioral genes interact with virtually all existing environments to create a notable divergence in early psychological development; and the divergence is almost always widened in later psychological development by cultural sanctions and training. Societies can probably cancel the modest genetic differences entirely by careful planning and training, but the convergence will require a conscious decision based on fuller and more exact knowledge than is now available.

To take a final example, here is Wilson on the supposed proneness of man to aggression:

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> Aggression does not resemble a fluid that continuously builds pressure against the walls of its containers, nor is it like a set of active ingredients poured into an empty vessel. It is more accurately compared to a preexisting mix of chemicals ready to be transformed by specific catalysts that are added, heated, and stirred at some later time.

In other words, sometimes we are caused to be angry, and when the provocation is severe enough, our anger runs away with us. Why? That is the nature of human beings. We would not act that way if our genes were different.

There is much of this sort of analysis in *On Human Nature*: conformity to social norms is traced back to "conformist" genes; religion is explained by reference to an aboriginal human impulse, "sacralization." It is a kind of explanation that comes perilously close to the medieval proposition that opium, under proper conditions, can put us to sleep because it has dormitive powers. For that matter, at least we know, within reasonable limits, what "dormitive" means. When Wilson uses a word like "aggression," however, it covers a gamut from destruction for the pleasure of destruction to the behavior of an animal or human being whose vital interests are in collision with those of others. *L'eléphant est un animal féroce; quand on l'attaque, il se défend.*

In brief, where currently controverted issues are concerned, Wilson's views are usually conventional ideas in biological wrappings. On the whole, despite the brouhaha he has caused, he leans to the view that social environment is the primary agent in shaping human behavior. What separates him from the critics with whom he shares that view is only the qualification that, while environment is responsible for most of our behavior, it is perhaps not responsible for all.

Why, then, the brouhaha? One reason, undoubtedly, is that his critics are rendered anxious even by this small qualification. They would rather not have it expressed. It is obvious to them, as it is obvious to anyone, that human beings have characteristics which no society has created and to which all societies must respond or face trouble—needs for food, sexual drives, cycles of maturation and aging, requirements for warmth, communication, emotional support. It is probably obvious to most of Wilson's critics, too, that individuals differ in their tastes and capacities, and that, B. F. Skinner to the contrary notwithstanding, no environmental reforms can make everyone capable of creating a Sistine Chapel or even desirous of doing so. But they would prefer that such truths be treated with silence. The open mention of them, like the mention of sex in polite Victorian circles, can only incite wicked thoughts. Wilson, in their eyes, has opened a dangerous door: once opened, no one can know what new and more disturbing reservations may have to be entertained about the omnipotence of environmental influences. And Wilson, despite the innocuous character of most of his specific opinions about social issues, has nevertheless done something himself to arouse such fears. Not only has he brought together a great mass of arresting information about the genetically programmed social behavior of animals, but he offers a great plan for sociobiological research, a sweeping form of scientific materialism, and a good deal of talk about social planning that suggests, at least to eager critics, that there is a technocrat or a eugenicist hiding behind his conciliatory words.

But perhaps there is also something more. The ideology of sociobiology is separable from its scientific merits. But as an ideology, at least in Wilson's formulation, it occupies one piece of common ground with the ideology of its critics. What we have is a quarrel between adherents of a common faith. It is the faith that the old notion of Divine Design can be replaced by an almost equally encompassing notion of Human Design.

IV

When Darwin produced massive amounts of data indicating that man and other primates had a common origin, he did not call attention to facts that no one before him had ever noticed. The similarities between monkeys and human beings had long been part of the common sense of mankind. Nor was it the idea that the human body and human nature were the products of a long process of development that essentially shocked the Victorian mind. There was a history of such speculation before Darwin, as there was also a history of argument that the destiny of man, like that of the animals, was to struggle grimly for survival. Darwin himself took this idea from a Christian minister, Thomas Malthus.

It was two other implications of the Darwinian theory that made the greatest trouble. One was the indication that there was no separate Creation for man, no moment in the history of the evolutionary process when the laws of development ceased their operation and man, miraculously, was invested with a soul. The other was the profoundly anti-teleological thrust of Darwin's thought. There were no preordained ends to the evolutionary process; there were, indeed, no ends at all, only temporary terminations which were themselves new beginnings. Nature had no direction; it could not even be said to be a fumbling experimenter, seeking new and better forms for living things. And while human beings had ideals and goals, and these could be seen as the instruments used by the species to control its destiny, such ideals and goals were themselves products of the evolutionary process and freighted with the experience through which the species had gone. The dumb inert past —out of human control and largely beyond human memory—controlled the behavior of human beings and the shape of human nature and human institutions. Human thoughts about the

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future were at best minor elements in the history of the race.

Darwin himself was disturbed by this implication of his theory, and wrote Charles Peirce inviting the American philosopher to give his attention to the problem of how the human mind can function as an agent in human evolution. That it can so function is attested by history, not least the history of human creativeness since Darwin: social insurance, public-health measures, the revolution in communications, the progress in surgery, nuclear energy, are a few of the human artifices that have profoundly affected the character of human life, and the nature of the human future, including the composition of the human gene pool. It is clearly a mistake to say that mankind does not have some power over its destiny.

But the picture of the human condition which emerges from the Darwinian theory remains untouched at its core. Man is an animal most of whose doings are not the product of conscious thought, whether his or nature's. He can come to know more about himself and the universe he inhabits. His nobility lies in his effort to master his fate. But he understands and masters it, when he does, at the edges. His reconstruction of his environment, and of his own behavior and nature, is piecemeal at best, and can be nothing more. A great rational pattern, an encompassing idea of justice and goodness, cannot be successfully imposed on the natural or the human scene. These scenes are clutters of accident. A causal order can be discerned by man in some parts of the clutter, but that causal order is not what the human heart would like.

Religious people have had their own ways of rejecting this picture, or of absorbing it into their faiths. They speak of God's purposes as inscrutable, or limited to another and immaterial world. But many of those who think of themselves as having wholly accepted the Darwinian scheme have also found this aspect of the evolutionary story too bitter to swallow. Consciously or unconsciously, they have sought to think their way around it by returning purpose to the universe in the shape of a supremely masterful human reason. At one extreme, that reason can reshape man's environment and make a new animal of him. At the other extreme, that reason can grasp man's genetic structure, and learn enough to shape his evolution to his heart's desire. This denaturalized humanism is the common thread that runs through the evangelical materialisms and positivisms of the 19th century, and as the quarrels over sociobiology reveal, it persists in the 20th century, and joins many in the hereditarian camp to many in the environmentalist.

The distinction between "hereditarians" and "environmentalists" is not a distinction between "conservatives" and "liberals," or "Left" and "Right." Kant and Noam Chomsky, two men of the "Left," have argued for preordained structures in the human mind. Hume and Burke, usually called "conservatives," have argued for the great influence of custom and convention. Indeed, at the extremes, neither "hereditarians" nor "environmentalists," neither Wilson nor his opponents, are quite evolutionary enough in their thinking. On both sides, they ignore or underestimate the significance of that great area of human life which is controlled by the custom that is second nature, and which is the product of evolutionary experience, though it may leave no genetic deposit in its wake. Mankind lives within institutions—markets, legal systems, families, states, etc.—which are the products of history. They have not been conscious inventions, although at times conscious intelligence has figured in the process of remodeling them. But more frequently they have been changed by quite unintellectual forces, and we are living with the consequences, sometimes fortunate, very frequently unfortunate. Yet we cannot begin *de novo*. Try to think of remaking the world as though such structures did not exist, or had not shaped our ideas, character, and passions, and the human mind fails or sinks into forms of madness.

As a science, sociobiology is new, and probably important. As the basis for an intelligent philosophy, it belong to that stream of thought to which people of various political dispositions have belonged—Erasmus, Rousseau, Diderot, John Stuart Mill, Freud—to name only a few. It reminds us of what the evangelistic fever about an idea tends to make us forget: that human beings have a certain physiology; that their bodies usually control their minds; that they have certain drives, and go through certain arcs of development, which are biological in origin. Societies shape these drives and affect these patterns of development profoundly. But just as there are a hundred ways of shaping shoes but the human foot remains there to pay the price, so, for each form of social orientation or control, there is a human cost. This is not a new thought, but it is a useful one. We are not machines to be taken apart or put together again. We are organisms with a long history in our genes, and in our habits and sentiments.

But as a social ideology, sociobiology breathes something of the same spirit that B. F. Skinner's *Walden Two* does. It is regrettable that a field of inquiry that can offer so much passionately interesting information, and that has the potential to teach a reasonable philosophical modesty, should also be overlaid with the vision of still another brave, new world. But as Edward Wilson might remind us, this is what tends to happen to ideas when an animal with the human genetic predispositions gets hold of them. Whether or not such an explanation holds, it is certainly what happens regularly on the present intellectual scene.

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Living with Intermarriage

David Singer

TO NON-JEWS, the attitude of the American Jewish community toward intermarriage must appear puzzling. On the one hand, American Jews seem to want nothing more than to be fully integrated into American society. They take obvious pleasure in having found a place for themselves in the most exclusive neighborhoods, on the best college campuses, and in the highest councils of government, and are quick to label attempts to set up barriers against them as discriminatory. On the other hand, these same Jews, or at least the organized segment of the community, continue to oppose the ultimate step of the integration process—intermarriage. Several years ago, Jewish groups raised such a clamor over a CBS television series, *Bridget Loves Bernie*, which portrayed a marriage between a Jew and an Irish Catholic in a favorable light, that the program was eventually taken off the air. A non-Jew might well wonder, then, if American Jews are pleased or saddened by the recent Gallup Poll finding that fully 69 per cent of Americans now approve of marriages between Jews and Christians.

The answer, of course, is that American Jews are both delighted by the Gallup finding and very worried about it—as one might expect, given the fact that their deepest commitment is to the twin goals of integration and survival. Organized Jewish life in the United States has always been predicated on the assumption that these two goals are fully compatible. But are they? The growing incidence of intermarriage has begun to raise grave doubts about the matter. For this reason, intermarriage has become the single most pressing problem confronting the organized Jewish community. But there is a gap between acknowledging a problem and dealing with it. Because the majority of American Jews are unwilling even to contemplate the possibility that they may have to choose between integration and survival, Jewish groups have been hard-pressed to cope with the burgeoning intermarriage crisis. If anything, there seems to be a growing sentiment within the community that attempts to halt the spread of intermarriage are doomed to failure and therefore the sensible course is to make the best of it.

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II

GIVEN the importance of the intermarriage issue, it is remarkable how little effort Jewish communal groups have made to obtain reliable information about it. Up to a point, this merely reflects a more general inertia: American Jews have never shown much interest in seriously examining their own institutions and mores. In this particular case, however, the lack of information probably also reflects what Marshall Sklare has called "avoidance behavior": American Jews have been reluctant to confront the issue of intermarriage because the dilemmas it poses are simply too painful. Most painful of all, of course, is the fact that, as Sklare puts it, intermarriage represents the "logical culmination of the quest for full equality," while at the same time striking "at the core of Jewish group existence." Then, too, Jews find it extremely unsettling that in opposing intermarriage they seem to be spurning that liberal creed of equality for all which they have always been so quick to embrace. Finally, taking a stand against intermarriage seems to imply a rejection of romantic love, and of the right of young people to choose their own marriage partners, and Jews feel uncomfortable being cast in such a role.

Small wonder, then, that the American Jewish community turned a blind eye to intermarriage for decades; the first symposium on the subject by a major national Jewish organization did not take place until 1963. Even now, when the intermarriage problem has reached critical proportions, Jewish groups have still not managed a systematic examination of the phenomenon.

The most reliable figures we have so far on intermarriage are almost ten years old. They derive from the National Jewish Population Study, an overall demographic census of the American Jewish community commissioned by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, and carried out between late 1970 and early 1972. The data on intermarriage exist only in preliminary form, are based on sampling methods which have

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been challenged, and are subject to significant margins of error. Nonetheless, the NJPS statistics are the best guide currently available about marriages between Jews and non-Jews in the United States.

The most startling NJPS finding is that the rate of such marriages, which prior to 1960 had never reached 13 per cent, more than doubled between 1961 and 1965 to a rate of 29 per cent, and between 1966 and 1972 climbed to an astonishing 48 per cent. It is important to note, however, that these figures deal with marriages and not individuals. Taking account of the fact, then, that there are two Jews involved in each endogamous marriage, and only one in each exogamous union, we find that 31 per cent of the Jews who married between 1966 and 1972 married Gentiles.

Needless to say, the NJPS statistics, which indicated an intermarriage rate twice as high as had previously been assumed,* caused a great stir in Jewish communal circles. Some comfort could be found in the fact that the study, by defining intermarriage as a marriage of a Jew to someone who was not Jewish at the time the couple first met, also included converts to Judaism (19 per cent of the initially non-Jewish spouses) among the intermarried. On the other hand, the study dealt only with intact marriages, thus ignoring divorced couples, among whom the intermarried may be disproportionately represented. All in all, the NJPS estimate of 48 per cent for the 1966-72 period is probably a rough approximation of reality. Since 1972, the rate has undoubtedly increased.

SO MUCH for the bad news. The good news, if one can call it that, according to the NJPS, is that intermarriage is not an automatic one-way ticket out of the Jewish community. On the contrary, the study found that nearly half of the initially non-Jewish spouses answered "yes" to the question, "Are you Jewish now?" Moreover, about three-quarters of intermarried couples who had children stated that they were rearing them as Jews, and 70 per cent of the total number intended to provide their children with some form of Jewish education. That these affirmations of Jewishness had to be taken with a grain of salt, however, is indicated by the fact that something like three-quarters of intermarried couples were "not at all" active in a synagogue; the figure for those uninvolved in Jewish organizations of any kind was even more disappointing.

The National Jewish Population Study did not provide a statistical breakdown of differences in Jewish orientation between couples where a conversion had occurred and those where it had not. This is most unfortunate, since a study conducted by Bernard Lazerwitz in Chicago in 1966-67, which was a kind of trial run for the NJPS, found the two groups to be strikingly different.† While non-converting Christians and their Jewish spouses were quite marginal in their Jewish involvements, converts and spouses of converts rated above-average in terms of synagogue and Jewish organizational activity. A new study carried out by the American Jewish Committee confirms this pattern.** Reporting on a nationwide sample of intermarried couples, Egon Mayer and Carl Sheingold write:

> . . . the level of Jewish content and practice in mixed marriages [intermarriages where there is no conversion] is low; only about one-third of the Jewish partners in such marriages view their children as Jewish; and most such children are exposed to little by way of Jewish culture or religion. . . . Conversionary marriages compare favorably not only with mixed marriages but with endogamous marriages as well. In the conversionary marriage, Jewish identity is not merely asserted; it is acted upon, particularly with respect to religious affiliation and observance. Thus, in some ways, there is more reason for optimism about Jewish continuity in families where the born-Gentile spouse has converted to Judaism than there is in the typical endogamous family.

While the figures cited here provide a useful starting point, they hardly begin to explain the phenomenon of intermarriage in the U.S. today. We do not know, for example, what roles selective migration and differing residential patterns play in determining intermarriage rates. We do not know what relation exists between socioeconomic status (education, occupation, income) and intermarriage. We do not know whether Jewish background (education, religious observance, organizational activity) plays a determining role in intermarriage. We do not know why Jewish men tend to intermarry more than Jewish women, and whether this situation is changing as a result of the women's movement. We do not know what factors lead non-Jewish spouses to convert, and whether conversions today are on the increase or the decrease. We do not know if intermarried couples have a higher divorce rate than endogamous couples, or what ultimately happens to the children of intermarried couples. In short, despite a general sense of urgency, we know very little.††

* Writing in 1970, Marshall Sklare estimated the rate of intermarriage to be around 25 per cent. See "Intermarriage and Jewish Survival," COMMENTARY, March 1970.

† "Intermarriage and Conversion: A Guide for Future Research," *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, June 1971.

** *Intermarriage and the Jewish Future*, by Egon Mayer and Carl Sheingold, American Jewish Committee, 1979.

†† A point worth noting is that a high rate of intermarriage is hardly unknown to modern Jewish history. In Budapest and Vienna, for example, at the turn of the century, the rate was 20 to 30 per cent, while in Berlin during the period of the Weimar Republic it was 25 per cent. Even Warsaw in 1929 had a rate of 20 per cent. Arthur Hertzberg has argued that "intellectual secularization produces in the third generation everywhere, without exception, in the Diaspora, a 35- to 40-per-cent rate of intermarriage."

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Yet whatever the gaps in our knowledge of the subject, one thing is clear: the ever-increasing number of Jews marrying non-Jews poses a threat both to Jewish group survival—particularly in view of the very low Jewish birth rate—and to the continuity of generations within the family and the ability of family members to identify with one another.

III

Prior to the 1960's, when the intermarriage rate was relatively low, the organized Jewish community, to the degree that it took cognizance of Jewish-Gentile marriages at all, felt confident that it could control the situation.* To be sure, intermarriage was regarded as a problem, but a problem of manageable proportions. Jewish groups did not hesitate to speak publicly about the need to prevent intermarriage, and there was no inhibition in speculating about the negative factors which led some Jews into it. Basically, intermarriage was regarded as a form of deviancy, attributable to such things as Jewish self-hatred, status seeking, a child's desire to inflict pain on his parents, and so forth. Within the family, the standard means of discouraging such marriages—so standard it has entered the folklore—was what Marshall Sklare has called the "discord approach": parents would dwell on the marital problems, frequently ending in divorce, which mixed marriages inevitably entailed. This pragmatic line of argument was particularly attractive to Jewish parents because it enabled them to oppose intermarriage in good conscience while avoiding the value conflicts that might otherwise have arisen.

Like so much else in American society, all this changed in the 1960's. As the intermarriage rate soared, there was a perceptible erosion within the Jewish community of all the old certainties. Marriages between Jews and Gentiles had become so commonplace that American Jews could no longer console themselves with the theory that intermarriage was a social or personal aberration. Nor could Jewish parents seriously expect their children to heed warnings about intermarriage leading to divorce, when the soaring divorce rate obviously affected Jewish couples no less than intermarried ones. Finally, as the rate of intermarriage increased, it generated—as is usual in cases of social change—a measure of approval for itself and began to look like the wave of the future. Thus, Marshall Sklare, writing in 1970, could point to an "erosion of confidence" among the more acculturated elements of American Jewry that the "battle against intermarriage [can] be won." He went on: "This is why the struggle is now viewed not as a matter of prevention, but increasingly . . . as a matter of accommodation to the inevitable." A decade later, it is clear that Sklare's analysis has been fully borne out. Everywhere, except in the Orthodox community, the spirit of accommodation is today in the ascendancy.

Since the rabbinate, and particularly the Reform rabbinate, is on the front line of the intermarriage issue, it is not surprising to find that accommodationist pressures have been most strongly felt here. Ironically, the best evidence for this is the fact that in June 1973, for the first time, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (the Reform rabbinic association), went on record as opposing the participation of CCAR members in "any ceremony which solemnizes a mixed marriage"—"mixed marriage" referring here to a marriage in which the non-Jewish partner does not convert.† Far from indicating a stiffening of resolution on the intermarriage question, as it might seem to do, the CCAR resolution actually represented a last-ditch effort to hold the line against the growing number of Reform rabbis who, under pressure from their congregants, had proved willing to officiate at mixed marriages. In 1972, such rabbis made up 41 per cent of the CCAR membership; today they comprise more than half. The conditions under which Reform rabbis will agree to solemnize mixed marriages vary: some require the non-Jewish partner to sign up for a course of study on Judaism; some require a pledge that the couple will raise their children as Jews; some have no requirements at all; and some will even officiate at a marriage ceremony in a church.

No sooner had the CCAR resolution been passed than it precipitated the formation of a counter group within the Reform rabbinate. The group, calling itself Concerned Members of the Conference, took issue with the resolution on grounds that, in the words of one of its spokesmen, Rabbi Irwin Fishbein, "rabbinic participation in mixed marriages is in the best tradition of Reform Judaism. It is an attempt to respond in a positive way to the increasing incidence of mixed marriage in a mobile and open society." Rabbi Fishbein, who directs the Rabbinic Center for Research and Counseling, argues that far from worsening the situation, participation by rabbis in mixed marriages actually improves it, for otherwise a "total sense of rejection would be transmitted to about one out of every three Jews who marry today, and would do irreparable harm to the cause of Jewish survival." He insists that he and his colleagues who perform mixed marriages are the true champions of Jewish survival since they seek to "maximize the Jewish potential [of such marriages] and thereby strengthen our historic tradition."

* The situation prior to the 1960's is excellently described in Marshall Sklare's "Intermarriage and the Jewish Future," COMMENTARY, May 1964.

† In the same month, the New York Board of Rabbis, representing all three branches of Judaism, voted to bar from membership rabbis who officiate at mixed marriages, or who make referrals to those who do.

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RABBINIC accommodation to intermarriage is, however, by no means confined to the Reform movement. As the Conservative laity has increasingly taken on the social complexion of its Reform counterpart, Conservative rabbis too have been faced with a rising tide of intermarriages within their congregations. They themselves are not willing, of course, to perform mixed marriages. However, many of them have become strong advocates of a liberalized approach to conversion, their aim being to make it easier for the non-Jewish partners in mixed unions to enter the Jewish fold. Thus, Robert Gordis, a leading Conservative spokesman, argues:

> On the theoretic level, the *halakhic* principle that the conversion must be free of ulterior motives is unquestionably sound. But it must not be approached in simplistic terms. Human motivation is always complex. When the non-Jewish partner is prepared to undertake a process of serious Jewish study and then finds that he can conscientiously accept the principles and practices of Judaism for himself, the fact that his original impetus was the desire to marry a Jew can hardly be described as "ulterior." . . . Nor can the desire to establish a home that would not be religiously and spiritually divided against itself hardly be described as unworthy. For a non-Jew to abandon the advantage of being a member of the dominant majority and to throw in his lot with the Jewish community . . . is a substantial test of sincerity.

Rabbi Gordis is explicit as to his motivation here: "The Jewish community simply cannot afford to lose thousands upon thousands of its sons and daughters without making a yeoman effort to reduce . . . the defections from its ranks."

These arguments are not without weight. But there is another, more sordid, side to rabbinic involvement in the intermarriage issue which cannot be ignored. We must bear in mind that pressure upon rabbis to accommodate to intermarriage comes mainly from the Jewish parents within their congregations whose sons or daughters are about to marry non-Jews. As often as not, the couple itself is perfectly happy to settle for a civil marriage, while the Jewish parents insist on some kind of religious ceremony. If the Gentile partner (usually the bride, according to statistics) agrees to convert, there is of course no problem. If not, the search immediately gets under way for a rabbi willing to officiate at a mixed marriage. Unfortunately, this whole process lends itself to the most cynical exploitation—as Daniel Schwartz recently pointed out in an article titled "The Intermarriage Ripoff" (*Moment*, August 1978). The author, who is himself a Reform rabbi, surveyed 47 rabbis in New York State who officiate at mixed marriages and found the following:

> . . . only ten as much as spoke to the [Jewish-Gentile] couples on the telephone prior to the ceremony, and of the ten, only three asked to see the couple before the wedding. Of the 37 who had no contact with the couple, 33 had their secretaries handle all the details; four had their secretaries ask the couple to come in for a meeting with the rabbi. . . . In every case the secretary was very careful to make sure that the caller understood what the rabbi's fee would be and what time the ceremony would begin and end. . . . The fees requested by all 47 ranged anywhere from $75 to $250, and in one particular case was $350. When asked why the last fee was so high, the secretary said indignantly, "Well, he's a national figure, you know." When the same rabbis were [approached by Jewish couples], the amounts plummeted to between $50 and $125, the highest charge being that of the "national figure."

Rabbi Schwartz concludes: "If there is a principle involved here, it appears to be the principle of the fast buck."

But the corruption is not only of a financial kind, and it is not only Reform rabbis who are implicated. Many rabbis who do not themselves officiate at mixed marriages refer couples to rabbinic colleagues who do. Quite often, the referral is made by a Conservative or Orthodox rabbi who has a problem within his own congregation. Almost invariably, the rabbis who are recommended are the ones with the lowest standards, the ones who will, so to speak, make the "least trouble." They are the ones who get to wash the community's dirty laundry.

IV

SUCH is the prevalence of intermarriage, and the pressure to come to terms with it, that a new literary genre has come into being—"how-to" books for intermarried couples. Two examples of the genre, radically different in tone, are Samuel Sandmel's *When a Jew and Christian Marry** and Samuel Silver's *Mixed Marriage: Between Jew and Christian*.†

Sandmel's book is a truly remarkable cultural artifact: a guide for perplexed Jewish-Gentile couples, written by a prominent Jewish scholar (the author is Distinguished Service Professor of Bible and Hellenistic Literature at Hebrew Union College) and presented to the public by a Catholic publishing house. In the foreword to the book, Sandmel makes it clear that he is not taking a position on intermarriage itself, but addressing "those who have already decided" to intermarry. Believing that "religious traditions exist to serve people, not people to serve religious traditions," he attempts to be helpful to couples of mixed religious background by dealing with a broad array of issues of concern to them: "How can they make a

* Fortress Press, 1977.

† Arco Publishing Company, 1977.

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go of it? What are the possible pitfalls that can jeopardize such a marriage? How much does the religious difference mean? How much do family, history, and society intrude? What minimum ought the couple to know about Judaism and Christianity? In short, is such guidance possible as to insure a successful marriage?" As Sandmel tackles these questions, it is impossible, whatever one's views about intermarriage, not to be impressed by his seriousness of purpose and genuine sympathy.

An altogether different venture is Samuel Silver's *Mixed Marriage: Between Jew and Christian*, which treats its subject with boundless high spirits. Writing as one who has officiated at countless Jewish-Gentile marriages—Rabbi Silver sets up no requirements for the couples involved, and often appears jointly with a Christian clergyman in a church ceremony—the author fairly bubbles with enthusiasm. To be sure, he points out that not everyone is suited for such a union and warns that intermarried couples can expect to "encounter complications galore." Those who do take the plunge, however, are reassured that they are the "harbingers of a new kind of world unity, in which not only couples but ideologies and theologies will 'live happily ever after.'" Rabbi Silver rhapsodizes on the new dawn about to break over humanity: "The world . . . is undergoing a new '*briss*ening,' the emergence of people who are determined to transcend the limitations of adherence to one branch of the Judeo-Christian family." Small wonder, then, that, as he puts it, "families have 'schlepped' me long distances so that the Jewish moment in the weddings would be assured." His reward for all this, aside from the honorariums he receives, is the "satisfaction of being of service, and perhaps assuring the survival of my faith."

Sandmel and Silver address themselves to the actual couples involved, and may be said to be engaged in a species of pastoral counseling. But what about the Jewish community as a whole? When accommodation is the order of the day, it too must learn how to live with intermarriage. Here, it is social science which comes to the rescue with the argument that widespread intermarriage may not be such a bad thing—that, indeed, it may be a positive good. Two recent articles which develop this theme are Samuel Lieberman's and Morton Weinfeld's "Demographic Trends and Jewish Survival" (*Midstream*, November 1978) and Fred Massarik's "Rethinking the Intermarriage Crisis" (*Moment*, June 1978).

Lieberman, a statistician with the Population Council, and Weinfeld, a sociologist at McGill University, pull off a near-impossible feat: they manage to argue simultaneously for a low birth rate and a high intermarriage rate—and to do this, moreover, in the name of Jewish survival! Central to their "alternative, survivalist perspective on the Jewish future" is the assumption that demographic trends have to be assessed in the light of "specific community obligations and objectives." One vital objective of American Jewry is securing political support for the state of Israel, and intermarried couples, Lieberman and Weinfeld maintain, can play a crucial role in this regard:

> The successful exercise of influence is best achieved in a community with a large subset of members interacting with politicians and opinion leaders. Through intermarried Jews themselves, and certainly through their social networks involving Jewish family and friends . . . Jewish concerns, interests, and sensibilities can be articulated before a wider, more influential audience. In a recent interview, Presidential aide Robert Lipshutz traced the origin of Jimmy Carter's concern for Israel to his close friendship with a first cousin, an Orthodox Jew (Carter's aunt married a Jewish man, and their two children were raised as Jews).

This, then, is the "strategic function" of intermarriage in contemporary American Jewish life.

Fred Massarik's article is of special interest because he served as scientific director of the National Jewish Population Study which first alerted Jewish communal circles to the existence of an "intermarriage crisis." Having been the bearer of sad tidings in 1973, Massarik now comes forward with a message of consolation: American Jews have suffered unduly because of "panic sowing" on the intermarriage issue; discussions of the subject have "overstate[d] considerably the danger we face." Has Massarik come into possession of new data? Not at all. He merely presents (selectively) the existing NJPS findings in such a way as to put the best possible face on the situation. Thus, he consistently focuses on attitudes—how many non-Jewish spouses identify as Jews; how many intermarried couples plan to give their children a Jewish education—rather than on behavior. He stresses the continued Jewish involvement of Jewish women who intermarry, while barely noting the fact that twice as many Jewish men marry non-Jews as do Jewish women. Most importantly, he never makes good on his promise to present data addressing the "issue of the quality of Jewish life as it is affected by intermarriage." Small wonder, since such data would hardly serve to buoy the accommodationist spirit.

V

American Jews, with the exception of the Orthodox, then, are clearly intent upon making peace with intermarriage. As the intermarriage rate continues to rise, and it will almost certainly do so, pressures to accede to it will become even stronger within the community. The stronger these pressures become, the more

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they will encourage mixed unions which in turn will generate still further demands for concessions. The spiral is almost certainly bound to continue upward.

This does not mean that American Jewry is in danger of disappearing. No matter what, a sizable Jewish community will be maintained by the simple device of redefining Jewishness in such a way as to include all kinds of people whose *bona fides* would not previously have been acceptable. Just as non-Jews who have undergone conversions under Reform auspices which do not conform to *halakhic* practice are virtually accepted today as full-fledged members of American Jewry, so will other individuals also be accepted. Already, a number of Reform rabbis have begun to practice what they call "cultural" conversions, wherein the prospective convert is permitted to retain his Christian faith so long as he professes a sense of identification with the Jewish people. This is one area, we may be sure, where necessity will prove to be the mother of invention, whether among the clergy or elsewhere. This is certainly true of both the Lieberman-Weinfeld article and the one by Massarik, which actually speculate about a possible Jewish population *gain* as a result of intermarriage. Not surprisingly, the former writers are all in favor of "voluntaristic and subjective interpretations" of Jewishness, while the latter author stresses the importance of a "drift" toward Judaism on the current intermarriage scene.

If widespread intermarriage does not point to the inevitable demographic decline of American Jewry, it certainly poses the threat of a critical weakening of the quality of Jewish life. It is one thing to call people Jews, but quite another to have them respond in a meaningful way to Jewish symbols and traditions. Where will these newly ordained "Jews" look for guidance when *The Jewish Catalog* is no less alien to them than the *Shulhan Arukh*? Can one realistically expect them to become consumers, let alone producers, of serious Jewish culture? Or, for that matter, to be staunch supporters of Israel simply because they have been dubbed "Jewish"?

Finally, what needs to be emphasized is that the intermarriage issue, for all its importance, is but one aspect—perhaps the most visible—of the larger problem facing American Jewry. A great deal of discussion is currently going on in Jewish communal circles about whether intermarriage leads to assimilation—or, as the new American Jewish Committee study puts it, whether Jewish-Gentile marriages "lead to a diminishing identification with Judaism and the Jewish community." But the real problem is exactly the reverse. It is not intermarriage which leads to assimilation, but assimilation which leads to intermarriage. The most telling NJPS findings are not those that deal with marriages between Jews and Gentiles, but rather those that deal with marriages between Jews. Is it surprising that intermarriage is so widespread when 57 per cent of Jewish couples do not participate in any synagogue or Jewish organizational activity? Until the community comes to grips with this reality, the intermarriage crisis will continue to deepen.

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From Avant-Garde to Pop

Samuel Lipman

IN MUSIC composition at the present time, anything goes. Vanished are the days of the enforced styles associated with post-World War II modernism—serialism, neo-Dadaism, and indeterminacy among them. The erstwhile avant-garde has retreated to the academy in two senses: not only has it exchanged the living present for historical status, but in many cases its remaining younger practitioners are contentedly giving up any dream of liberation for the reality of college tenure.

In the place of the dogmatic styles of Stockhausen and Boulez, of Babbitt and even Cage, we now find—especially in the United States—the aesthetics of the cafeteria. Suddenly everything from both the present and the past has become available for a composer's use. Going vastly beyond the immersion in antique idioms associated with Stravinsky and Hindemith, even a single piece—as in works of the American George Rochberg (born 1918)—can contain a medley of several composers' musical styles and even contents. And increasingly, musical elements both basic and simple, and dating back hundreds of years, can once again be presented proudly as the latest discovery.

It is plain that this lack of a single, unified aesthetic is itself an aesthetic. In the same way as Stravinsky's very impersonality constituted his musical personality, the multiplicity of available choices marks the character of today's new music, both in what composers are searching for and in what they have found.

No artistic movement, no matter how unprecedented it may seem, arises out of nothing. The roots of the present post-avant-garde compositions lie, not surprisingly, in the avant-garde itself. Notwithstanding the evident failure of the modernist movement of the past generation to achieve its twin goals of destroying and replacing the past, that movement did—from 1945 to the end of the 1960's—train a generation of students, critics, and intellectual hangers-on; indeed, from its current commanding position in musical education, it continues to do so.

So it is only to be expected that many of its leading ideas—in such attenuated form as befits the survival of a failed ideology—should exist in the present to inform contemporary activity. This is the case with the central preoccupations of musical modernism: freedom—expressed internally as experimentation and externally as social provocation—and order—advocated as a means of extracting an aesthetic product from an originally anarchic insight. What once bound these two conflicting aesthetic principles together was the artist's inarticulate major premise, that somewhere, somehow, an audience existed for his compositions. Whether the avant-garde would have declined and died eventually from intrinsic musical causes alone is perhaps inherently unknowable; in any case, it can hardly be doubted that the avant-garde in music carried no audience with it, and that the internal disabilities of the new were more than matched by the apathy and outright hostility of a sophisticated music-loving public.

This hankering after an audience—a dirty little secret which so many avant-gardists always denied and continue to minimize—came out into the open with the rise of the youth culture more than a decade ago. The social sex appeal of the educated young masses, so seductive when exhibited in front of the Pentagon, seemed to provide both an irresistible inspiration and a tempting market for the artist. What was true for the painter and the writer was true for the composer as well; an honorable way had to be found to seek out this pleasurable destiny which had for so long eluded the musical avant-garde.

It can now be seen that the way which was found involved the putting into effect of avant-garde ideas stemming exactly from the notions of freedom and order—but without making any attempt to combine them. And still more important, whatever the value of these notions as jumping-off points, no attempt was made to carry them out rigorously, to pursue their logical implications to the absurd conclusion of popular failure. In this combination—the splitting up of hitherto yoked conceptions and the avoidance of their logical (and ideological) denouement—may be found the key to understanding today's new music.

THIS new music would seem to be made up of three major strains. Purely for the sake of descriptive convenience I have chosen to call them the aurally-sensuous, the revolutionary-political, and the pop-hopeful. Not only are they brought together by their common descent from the avant-garde, and their obvious interest in finding an audience; as a corollary of their efforts to implement this interest, they have been successful, in a way quite foreign to the products of the

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real avant-garde, in reaping favorable comments from critics and publications hostile in the past as well as from those friendly to musical modernism.

Beauty of sound, of course, has always been one of the features and attractions of music. A sweet voice, a rich-toned violin, a noble concert-grand piano, a symphony orchestra of varied colors and wide dynamic range—all these have served to carry melody, harmony, and structure, thus enabling music to make its obviously powerful effect. At various moments in the history of music, and especially in the hands of a few distinctively gifted performers, sound *per se* has assumed dominant interest; the careers of vocal and instrumental virtuosos (and more recently conductors) have been often based on their own "special" sound. And regardless of who might be playing it, the rise of the piano, for example, in the 19th century, was particularly marked by the appeal of its basic acoustical character. Similarly, the continuing development of new orchestral instruments and their featured use in romantic music served as a means of exciting the rapidly growing audience.

But essentially, as virtuosos came and went and orchestral colors became familiar to the public, more purely musical considerations—*which* notes were written and played, rather than just how they sounded—became once again the basis for judgment. Such a process operated, for example, with the music of Liszt, initially so successful because of its brilliant use of the characteristic sound of the piano. As time passed, however, the critical verdict has tended to find musical substance lacking in Liszt, and thus to relegate him as a composer to the second rank. This process has had a rather different outcome in the case of Debussy, whose initial impact was owed so largely to the vague "impressionist" sound he drew from the orchestra and the piano alike; but here critical judgment has increasingly stressed rich and profound harmonic and structural features.

For the avant-garde after 1945 (basing itself solidly upon pre-World War II developments) new aural possibilities—pursued in the name of the liberation of sound from the tyranny of music—became, to a historically unparalleled extent, an end in themselves. Not only was magnetic tape established as a means of bringing the "concrete" noises of everyday life into this new kind of music, but electronics itself was seen as a means of generating hitherto unheard and even unimagined sounds. In the non-electronically generated field, so-called "acoustic" instruments were explored in three areas: nonconventional methods of playing conventional instruments (including new techniques of vocal production); use of non-European instruments drawn from Oriental cultures as well as from non-white peoples previously considered primitive; and sounds produced by everyday objects mostly used percussively but sometimes in ways producing perceptible pitches. And as part of the spillover from the general fascination with electronics, all these sound sources, new and old alike, were subject to often massive electrical amplification.

In the hands of avant-garde composers, these sounds only seemed to repel rather than attract audiences, a consequence which at least fit well into the modernists' public mission of social provocation. But as the avant-garde weakened in the 1960's under the impact of the revolution of the young, it began to appear possible that sounds which had been used so often to offend could also be used to charm. It is precisely this search for pleasure rather than pain which has marked the compositional career of the most widely successful of the aural sensualists, George Crumb.

Born in West Virginia in 1929, Crumb studied with Ross Lee Finney, an American composer who was himself a student of such earlier avant-garde musicians as Nadia Boulanger, Alban Berg, and Roger Sessions. It is already possible to find in Crumb's *Five Pieces for Piano* (1962), one of the first of his works still played today, the composer's interest in varied instrumental usages—in this case playing on the strings as well as on the keys. His *Night Music I* and *II* (*Four Nocturnes*), written in 1963 and 1964, share a title derived (one assumes consciously) from the most atmospherically colorful music of Bartók; the second work in particular seems a kind of Webern without tears, as if the composer had deliberately set out to be a sheep in wolf's clothing.

This impression is reinforced by the two sets of *Madrigals* of 1965. Here the use of avant-garde writing techniques, including a singer employing glissando and flutter-tongue in addition to conventionally sung notes and the non-classical sound of a vibraphone, creates the unsettling paradox of modern means being used for sensual and even sentimental aesthetic purposes. Nor is this paradox anything but heightened by the fact that the *Madrigals* are settings of fragments from the poems of the Spanish writer Federico García Lorca; the fragments include such lines as "To see you naked is to remember the earth" and "Drink the tranquil water of the antique songs."

Crumb's next works, *Echoes I* ("Of Autumn") and *Echoes II* ("Of Time and the River") were written in 1966 and 1967 and are nostalgically concerned with the passage of time. *Echoes I* is again based on words by Lorca: ". . . and the broken arches where time suffers." *Echoes II* (winner of a Pulitzer Prize for 1968), in addition to quoting again the preceding Lorca phrase, also quotes the West Virginia state motto *Montani semper liberi* ("Mountaineers are always free") with a question mark added by the composer; one of the movements ends with the strings using the eerie-sounding harmonics so beloved of the avant-garde to muse on "Were You There When They Crucified the Lord?" Additional instrumental effects in these works include a xylophone tapping out the name of the composer in Morse code and the equipping of the strings with antique cymbals and glockenspiel plates.

More Lorca-inspired pieces followed, including the *Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death* (1968), two

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further sets of *Madrigals* (1969), and *Night of the Four Moons* (1969), a work (according to the composer) expressing an ambivalent attitude toward the Apollo lunar landing. In the last work, the earlier marked resemblance to Webern disappears, for thinness of sound is replaced by lushness, and increasingly the music becomes intermittently more tonal and more reflective of great works and styles of the past.

All this can be seen to best advantage in Crumb's most highly publicized and best-known work, *Ancient Voices of Children* (1970), a cycle of songs on texts by Lorca, for mezzo-soprano, boy soprano, oboe, mandolin, harp, electric piano, and percussion. Ranked by hopeful critics soon after its appearance with such pillars of modernism as Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* (1912), Boulez's *Le Marteau sans maître* (1954, revised 1957), and Stockhausen's *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1955-56), it suggests in its text the mood of Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*; as for the music, it veers in style from flamenco Spain to the spooky Orient and the Casbah, and along the way employs a fragment (played on a child's toy piano) from the *Anna Magdalena Bach Notebook* and a gentle reminiscence (again from Mahler) of *Das Lied von der Erde*. The instruments, in addition to those listed above, include Tibetan prayer stones, Japanese temple bells, tuned tom-toms, a harmonica, and a musical saw (to be played "hauntingly"). The sounds are not so much combined as alternated, and the general effect is of a tuneful, albeit melancholy, radio trip to the exotic lands and peoples far from our provincial shores.

This impression of tunefulness is increased in *Black Angels* (1970), written for electrified string quartet, and by *Vox Balenae* ("Voice of the Whale"), in which whale sounds are imitated by a masked flutist singing into his flute. Still more tuneful is *Lux Aeterna* (1971), a setting of the Latin requiem text; in this work, the performers are requested to wear black masks and robes, and a single candle is to be seen burning at the center of an otherwise dark stage.

JUST how Crumb's music sounds when deprived of the sentimental associations of Lorca's poetry, the washes of color provided by unfamiliar instruments and vocal techniques, and the theatrical effect of costumes and stage lighting, may be gathered from his most recent sets of solo piano pieces, *Makrokosmos I* (1972) and *Makrokosmos II* (1973). These works are each subtitled "Twelve Fantasy-Pieces after the Zodiac for Amplified Piano," and come, as is typical of Crumb's music, with extended directions in the score for producing the requisite sound effects. Each individual piece is assigned to an astrological sign, and further associated with someone of the composer's acquaintance born under that sign. In some of the pieces, the musical notation is contained (as is often the case with post-1945 music) on staves running in directions other than the customary left to right. This eye-catching layout, not required in Crumb's case for reasons of performer convenience, is employed to reinforce the programmatic mood of the pieces' titles; thus in *Crucifixus* (associated with Capricorn) a cruciform arrangement of the staves is used, with the left arm of the cross played first, followed by the right arm, and only then the notes on the upright staff.

But purged of all these extramusical elements, the music—given the piano's characteristic timbre, which is so much more easily degraded than varied—sounds at its best like warmed-over Debussy, as comparison, for example, with the piano prelude "What the West Wind Has Seen" will quickly show. Indeed, it is plain that to a large extent the music of Crumb represents an advance backward from avant-gardism to impressionism. It is this impressionism which has been responsible for Crumb's work being seen, as by Donal Henahan in the New York *Times*, as "ritual music for a religion of pure sound, a religion without dogma or guilt." But at the same time it is impressionism with a difference: for this new emphasis on sheer sound is not rooted, as was the music of Debussy, in a still creative 19th-century musical culture and, at the same time, an intellectual and social culture capable of informing both private creation and public loyalty.

Crumb is hardly to be blamed for not having been born in another time and another place. Still, however praiseworthy his interest in other cultures and the popular symbols of our time may be, more is required for authentic art than sensitivity to outside stimulus. Shorn of the necessary internal foundation, Crumb's music seems all too solidly based on the sacred icons of the fashionable liberal culture, from the work of a Spanish poet killed by the Franco regime to astrology and concern about the humpback whale, all expressed by an arbitrary choice of instruments chosen from the world over.

THE attempt to interest and please an audience through the essentially passive contemplation of sound is clearly one way to write new music. Another seemingly viable way is to concentrate on a different element of the avant-garde inheritance—its concern with the artist's revolutionary social and political position and mission.

The idea of the artist as vanguard element in society is hardly new; in the popular mind it goes back at least to the rise of the artist as bohemian in 19th-century France. Even earlier, Beethoven saw his work as the carrier of a revolutionary message of freedom and brotherhood. Chopin, writing from France, expressed in his piano pieces the stirrings of Polish nationalism. Wagner actually went so far as to draft lengthy schemes for the far-reaching reconstruction of the individual and the state.

In our own century, the relations between politics and the arts have been tangled, perhaps ultimately to the severe disadvantage of the artist. Nowhere has this been more true than in the Soviet Union, where music carrying a governmentally approved revolutionary message has been regularly produced by and required from Russian composers. But in the West it is significant that, whatever the political alignments of such aesthetic move-

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ments as Dadaism and Surrealism, and whatever the politics of such writers as the Mann brothers, among leading composers of the inter-war period the provocations offered were musical, not political; the politics of Bartók and Hindemith, of Schoenberg and Berg, of Stravinsky and Poulenc, hardly seem determining of or relevant (even where known) to their music. And in the few cases where politics were important—as with the German Communist Hanns Eisler—the result has been to relegate the music to the status of propaganda.

After World War II, however, a new edge of churlishness and polemics appeared in the way modernist musicians saw their artistic role. The fight for new music seemed a part of the general struggle against the "system." Less than a decade ago, John Cage was speaking admiringly of Mao; Pierre Boulez, almost at the same time as he was becoming music director of the New York Philharmonic, was saying:

> Our Western civilization would need Red Guards to get rid of a good number of statues or even decapitate them. The French revolution decapitated statues in churches; one may regret this now, but it was proof of civilization on the march.

And while Boulez's compositions have seemed apolitical, those of the Italian avant-garde composer Luigi Nono (an avowed Communist) have in several cases been based on Third World liberation movements.*

THOUGH by the end of the 1960's a large number of avant-garde works were informed by explicit political inspiration, the same questions could be raised about them as were asked about avant-garde music in general: for whom were these productions meant, and who, in actual fact, was listening to them? These questions were themselves the subject of a savage polemic entitled *Stockhausen Serves Imperialism* (1974),† by the sometime British avant-gardist Cornelius Cardew. For Cardew, now a Maoist, avant-gardism, under the conditions of what Herbert Marcuse called "repressive tolerance," meant writing for coterie audiences and capitulation to the ruling class. Even those of his colleagues who agreed with him politically were found guilty of obscuring the clarity and ease of communication of their revolutionary message to a wide, musically unsophisticated working-class audience.

One of Cardew's colleagues so criticized was the American composer Frederic Rzewski, born in Massachusetts in 1938 and educated at Phillips Andover Academy, Harvard College, and Princeton University. His early interest in avant-garde music led to an acquaintance with the work of Boulez, Stockhausen, Cage, and the composer-pianist David Tudor (the first performer of Cage's "silent" piece, *4'33"*). In 1966 Rzewski became a co-founder of the Musica Elettronica Viva (MEV) Group in Rome, a pioneer in experimental electronic improvisation.

The earliest of Rzewski's pieces available on records, *Les Moutons de Panurge* (1969), plainly emerges from his avant-garde interest in improvisation. In this work, a single melody is played in ever lengthening and then diminishing segments by "any number of instruments of any kind" in unison; when the players lose their place and are no longer playing with each other in unison, they are directed to continue to play without reuniting. The monotonous nature of the composition is thus enlivened by a whiff of anarchy, in which the worst (i.e., the most disorganized) performance is the best one.

While the social message of *Les Moutons* is implicit rather than explicit, the composer's next work, *Coming Together* (1972), is quite frank. The music is a setting of eight sentences out of a letter written from prison by Sam Melville—a radical terrorist of the 1960's who was later killed in the Attica rebellion—describing his feelings in confinement. The sentences begin

> I think the combination of age and a greater coming together is responsible for the speed of the passing time. . . .

and end

> I read much, exercise, talk to guards and inmates, feeling for the inevitable direction of my life.

The eight sentences are each broken into seven parts; each sentence is declaimed seven times by an actor (on the record, a long-time member of the Living Theater). The music consists of a single seventh chord on G with one note added, a C. All the musicians play essentially similar material, and are encouraged to improvise as long as they do not get lost. The result is jazzy, and by the end monotonous, for in the last section the performers are all playing in unison or in octaves—a reference to the "coming together" mentioned in Melville's letter and the work's title. Unfortunately, both the text, in its concern with self, and the music, with its emphasis on unity, suggest that the fulfillment so broadly hinted at in the phrase "coming together" is rather more solitary than reciprocal.

A 1973 work, the piano *Variations on "No Place To Go But Around"* (originally conceived for the Living Theater) is chiefly interesting for its demonstration, in the composer's own recording, of his colorful, warm-toned, and altogether extraordinary piano playing, and also of the use of revolutionary songs as melodic material. For Rzewski this technique came to fruition in the 1975 *Variations on "The People United Will Never Be Defeated."* This gigantic work—it lasts over 49 minutes—is based on a radical song dating from the Allende period in Chile. It is simple, singable, catchy, and written in a multiplicity of styles, from Beethoven to jazz; Rzewski's treatment of it uses every conceivable kind of variation writing, classical and modern, to clothe the tune, but nonetheless the theme is usually recognizable and almost always

* For a description of one such work, see my article, "Yesterday's New Music," in COMMENTARY, March 1979.

† For my review of this book, see COMMENTARY, December 1975.

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close to the music being played. For all its occasional use of avant-garde devices, the work too rarely covers territory any more interesting than the Horowitz version of the Liszt variations on Mendelssohn's "Wedding March." As a result, Rzewski's piece resembles at bottom 19th-century paraphrases of contemporary operatic or orchestral hits, and gives pleasure for the same reason these chestnuts do—melodic appeal and virtuoso display.

A recent New York performance of the work by a pianist closely associated with the avant-garde occasioned the following praise from the New York *Times*'s musically conservative senior critic, Harold Schonberg:

> It is an ingenious, heartfelt piece. . . . It is of course not necessary to consider Mr. Rzewski's politics or the message he was clearly trying to convey. The set of variations stands by itself as one of the few piano works of our time with real substance.

One may wonder whether a similarly ingenious and heartfelt piece based on an Afrikaner marching song would be granted a similar exemption from consideration of its politics. But in any case, Schonberg is right: so unrelated is the style of the music to Rzewski's revolutionary ideology that here, at least, politics can safely be ignored.

WHEREAS Rzewski's music now seems more conventional than innovative, another contemporary trend features what has variously been called solid state, minimalist, or trance music. There can be little question that this music depends heavily on transistor technology (frequently for tone generation and always for audibility) and that it resembles 1960's conceptual art in its emphasis on repetitive elements and its stripping down of both content and style. But there can also be little doubt that, as in other areas of the youth culture, it is the drug experience which has somehow provided the formative inspiration.

Whether the experience of this music is meant to substitute for or enhance drug usage, the first impression a listener gains is boredom. The music goes on at great length, changes little, and achieves no noticeable climax. Drugs aside, such music, at least in a superficial way, was not unknown in the past. Though it is impossible to know how listeners of the time heard the less distinguished music of the 18th century, it now seems to many music lovers attractive precisely because of its availability in large quantities, its moment-to-moment predictability, its relative lack of contrast and of specific memorability. All this, of course, changed in the 19th century; here the emphasis for composer as well as listener was on the assertion of the individual composer's personality in its differences from the work of others. As a result, part of the early 20th-century reaction against the immediate past took the form of denigrating the composer's pretensions and relegating music from the foreground of listener attention to the background.

Much of this change can be seen mirrored in the work of an avant-garde cult figure, the French composer Erik Satie (1866-1925). His music, though sometimes deeply moving, was heavy on charm and wit, but light in traditional weight and "significance." Two works of his are often cited as prophetic of later modernist developments: the *Musique d'Ameublement* ("Furniture Music") was conceived with Darius Milhaud in 1920 as something to be performed but not listened to while people went about their business, and the earlier *Vexations* (c. 1892-93) simply directed the performance of a half-page of music 840 times slowly and quietly.

BUT however provocatively this music was meant, Satie could not have hoped—or even wanted—it to be taken seriously. It was quite otherwise with the avant-garde productions of the 1950's and 1960's, which owe so much to Satie's example; for these composers, their work was conceived as an unlocking and a new definition of the very nature of the musical experience. No more typical representative of this new ambition, so different from the devil-may-care attitude of Satie and his followers, may be found than La Monte Young (born 1935), a reclusive and hermetic figure on today's new music scene. Trained as an avant-garde musician, Young was a pioneer in the writing of works in which (as in the case of Cage's *4'33"*) a few words replaced all the notes. In his *Composition 1960 #9*, even words disappear. In Young's own description, the work "consists of a straight line drawn on a piece of paper. It is to be performed and comes with no instructions." What remains to be explained is how this trifling content quickly became transmuted by Young and his followers into a music of enormous dimensions in time, frequent sound levels of barely tolerable loudness, and grandiose philosophical and artistic claims.

The answer is that this minimum of music now was to be clothed in a maximum of technology. In the work of Young himself, the process may be seen in *Dream House 78'17"*, the only recording (made in 1973) of his music now available. One side of this record consists of chants and drones, particularly influenced by Indian music, performed by two voices—the composer's and his wife's—a trumpet and trombone, and electronically generated sine waves controlled by the composer. This music is a subsection of *Map of 49's Dream: The Two Systems of Eleven Sets of Galactic Intervals Ornaments Lightyears Tracery*, itself a section of the even longer work, *The Tortoise, His Dreams and Journeys* (1964-), the tortoise in question being a pet turtle named *49*, now roaming the Pennsylvania woods. The entire composition is, in the composer's words, meant to be "perpetuated through the establishment of . . . long-term Dream Houses designed especially for its continuous performance." The second side of the record contains three sine waves (again controlled by the composer) all coming from the bass end of the audio spectrum.

The pitches sung and sounded are in a complicated system of tuning based upon a just intonation

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rather than the tempered scale used in Western music since the 18th century. The outstanding characteristic of this tuning system is the extent to which pitches so derived form pure intervals with each other, thus providing a sense of harmonic resonance and reinforcement rather than the frequent semi-clashings of our established even temperament. But whatever the theoretical complexities—and despite the composer's subtitling the recording "The Theater of Eternal Music"—the musical effect is one of interminable repetition of uninteresting fragments, extreme monotony when produced by voices, and total nullity when produced by electronic means alone.

AT THIS point, Young's work seems the focus of a narrow, if dedicated, cult; he has, however, influenced several figures whose primary orientation has been toward an altogether wider, less committed, and quite unrigorously selected audience. The first of these more popular successes was Terry Riley (born 1935). He burst on the scene with *In C* (1964), called (by the respected new music critic Alfred Frankenstein in *High Fidelity*) upon its recorded appearance in 1968, "one of the definitive masterpieces of the 20th century . . . conceivably the most important since the *Sacre [du Printemps]*" and "the global village's first ritual symphonic piece" (by Janet Rotter in *Glamour*). This composition, its complete score reprinted on the record jacket, is in C major and consists of 53 separate motifs played against a steady background of a repeated C octave on the piano. The motifs are played in order, each one as many times as each individual performer wishes; when all the performers arrive at motif 53, the performance is over.

Later recorded works by Riley, *Poppy Nogood and the Phantom Band* (1968) and *A Rainbow in Curved Air* (1969), both more dependent on electronics and more pop-oriented in sound and jacket copy, lack the ealier work's obsession and discipline. Something of the accommodation of the later works to the then prevailing youth culture may be gathered from the poem quoted on the jacket to accompany *Rainbow*; it describes the ending of all wars, the Pentagon "painted purple, yellow and green," "the energy from dismantled nuclear weapons" providing "free heat and light," and the "concept of work . . . forgotten."

IN TURNING from these juvenile banalities to another practitioner of minimalist music, Steve Reich (born 1936), one finds early work based upon the use of tape, and particularly the use of loops (short pieces of tape of pre-recorded material) as a means of infinite repetition. In *Come Out* (1966), Reich combined this technical device with the principle of phase shifting, in which identical material, recorded on different tape tracks, is allowed to grow slightly but increasingly apart, and then is just as gradually rejoined in perfect unison. The text of *Come Out*, again showing the heavy influence of avant-garde political ideas in some post-avant-garde music, comes from the words of a member of the "Harlem Six," a group arrested for murder during the Harlem riots of 1964. The passage describing how one of the prisoners got hospital treatment for his police-inflicted wounds—"I had to, like, open the bruise up and let some of the bruise blood come out to show them"—is endlessly repeated and divided, first into two voices, and then into four and eight. Not surprisingly, the resultant unexpected dislocations of sense and timing do little to relieve the ponderous didacticism; the work, however, only lasts 13 minutes.

From these weighty beginnings, Reich has moved on to a more widely appealing music. Significantly, he has dropped the use of tape, though hardly of amplification. *Four Organs* (1970) is 24 minutes of a repeated, gradually augmented and lengthened chord, played by electric organs against a steady maracas beat. After listening to the piece awhile, the listener becomes conscious of many tiny changes, all adding up to a set of distinctions without any real difference, of change without development, of process without direction. More ambitious still is *Drumming* (1971), influenced by the composer's trip to Africa to study native percussion performance techniques. While the work uses some African instruments, its sound is more that of a rhythm band substituting busyness for exoticism and mystery. Though the whole piece, which lasts 90 minutes, uses voices (and also whistling) and piccolo in addition to drums, glockenspiels, and marimbas, the total effect, because of the slow rate of change and the lack of perceptible growth, remains lackluster.

The same can be said of *Six Pianos* (1973), a cut-down version of Reich's idea to write a piece using all the pianos in a piano store. Strikingly different, however, is Reich's most recent work, *Music for Eighteen Musicians* (1974–76). Now available in a recording by the composer's own ensemble, it presents the familiar combination of repetition and length in an overall pop sound, justifying its release on a popular label rather than the classical labels of the previous Reich records. Totally gone are the telltale avant-garde characteristics of simultaneous thinness and stridency, of dryness and provocation. In place of these adversary elements is a sound that is soft-edged no matter how loud, harmonically lush, and altogether perfect for a family Christmas. The release was met with universal applause: the New York *Times*'s John Rockwell called it one of the ten best pop records of 1978, and the *New Yorker*'s Andrew Porter thought it "well described as 'an unbroken hour-long stretch of scintillating sounds in joyous patterns.' "

EVEN more successful, however, than Reich in achieving public recognition for his music has been another American, Philip Glass (born 1937). A student of the traditionalist composers William Bergsma and Vincent Persichetti at Juilliard, and of Milhaud at Aspen and Boulanger in France, Glass became interested in non-Western music through writing for the Indian sitarist Ravi Shankar in 1966; soon thereafter he studied the tabla with

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Alla Rakha. By 1968 he had founded his own ensemble (Steve Reich was a member for two years) of amplified keyboard and wind instruments which is to this day associated with his music.

An early work for amplified solo violin, *Strung Out* (1967), in most ways stakes out Glass's harmonic, structural, and rhythmic territory: simple modal and diatonic harmonies, simple melodic fragments augmented and diminished but always repeated and recognizable, and an insistent rhythmic pulse. These features—rhythmic and structural especially—may be assigned to the influence of non-Western music; still present in *Strung Out* is a pervasive aridity of texture, no doubt a legacy of the avant-garde propensity for transforming music into a lecture.

But from that point on, Glass's music was to lose this debilitating quality. Subsequent works, beginning with *Music in Similar Motion* and *Music in Fifths* (both 1969), explored rudimentary musical procedures aptly described by the titles; the violin used earlier was replaced by an ensemble including electric organs and saxophones. What had previously seemed at least partially non-Western now seemed, due to the triumph of rock music's heavy, electrified beat and repetitive chord structures, thoroughly domesticated.

In *Music with Changing Parts* (undated on the record jacket but presumably 1972 or before), Glass's sonic mix was augmented by the addition of amplified voices contributing quasi-instrumental sonorities; the result faintly suggests the then pandemic sound of long-haired girl folksingers crooning into microphones about the villainy of technology. This work, and its immediate successors—*Music in Twelve Parts* (1971–74) and *Contrary Motion* and *Two Pages* (both apparently *circa* 1974)—might, in their incessant iteration and underlining of patterns and progressions, strike a hostile observer as what Bach would sound like to a tone-deaf listener.

AFTER this period of striving for a means of converting the basic elements of music into a personal language, Glass was able, in 1974, to produce his most successful work. *Einstein on the Beach*, a five-hour opera written in collaboration with the post-avant-garde scenic designer and quasi-dramatist Robert Wilson, was performed numerous times across Europe, and twice in New York at the Metropolitan Opera House in 1976. It is not clear that this static and massive work is an opera in any conventional vocal or dramatic sense; still less clear is any real association with Einstein, though the use of "On the Beach" in the title (referring to Nevil Shute's novel about the fate of mankind after a nuclear holocaust) seems to see the great scientist as symbolic of our contemporary plight. Viewers of *Einstein* in performance were enthusiastic in their appreciation of the striking stage images, and of the cumulative effect of the music as well.

Condensed in its just-issued recording to under three hours, the music is divided into four acts containing nine scenes and five connecting interludes (called, for no explained reason, "knee plays"). All this is performed by four actors with speaking roles, a solo violin (a further suggestion of Einstein), a small and a large chorus, and the usual Philip Glass ensemble. The music was written to accompany—and perhaps to intensify—such stage images as a train, a trial, a prison, a building, a bed, and a space ship. Also heard, sometimes in the background and often in the foreground, are six speeches, three of them surrealistically evoking, among other pictures, a child's sailboat, the problems of eyeglass wearers, and an earthquake. Three apparently straightforward passages include a long sentence about a supermarket, a purposely clumsy tribute to Paris, and a sentimental story about two lovers on a park bench with which the opera closes.

To those who have listened to Glass's earlier music, what he has written here is almost entirely familiar. But the total effect is vastly greater and indeed moving. No longer is Glass writing pure music, expressive of the technical concerns so perfectly encapsulated in his simple titles. Now there are powerful symbols, informing both the composer in his writing and the listener (through the extensive text and illustrations which come with the recording).*

The images which Glass (and of course Wilson) have chosen to include, beginning with the genius and the devastation of the work's title and including the train, the trial, the prison, the bed, and the spaceship, are central to our modern mass sensibility. This is imagery which the pop-musical sound authentically reflects, and which deeply moves creators and audiences alike. And not content with these powerful pictures, the opera ends with the thrice-familiar harmonic cadences providing background for the following tremulously spoken romantic sentiments:

> "How much do you love me, John?," she asked. He answered "How much do I love you? Count the stars in the sky. Measure the waters of the oceans with a teaspoon. Number the grains of sand on the seashore. . . ."

The return from the avant-garde is thus complete. What began as musical revolution and social provocation has ended with hymn-tune harmonies and a homily to true love which every teenager in the throes of puppy love will find immediately convincing. In the context of a historical triumph so massive and unexpected as this one, it is hardly possible to begrudge Glass the commercial success for which he is striving and which the applause of the New York *Times*'s John Rockwell and Robert Palmer would seem to augur.

Much has been made of the extent to which Reich and Glass represent a crossover phenomenon—the replacement of the traditional narrow audience for serious music by the masses who attend popular culture. This proposed convergence of elite and mass art, which assumes the possibility of a wide audience for this new music, founders on two

* In this connection, it is significant that the recording of Glass's latest work, *North Star* (written for a film about the sculptor Mark Di Suvero), seems to the listener, because it lacks any accompanying descriptive material, an altogether less affecting experience than *Einstein*.

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observations. The music is not casually danceable and it lacks lyrics. It thus requires for its appreciation a kind of sophistication no broad group possesses. So it is not surprising that when a recent Carnegie Hall benefit, sponsored by the Columbia University student radio station WKCR, featured personal appearances by both Reich and Glass (among others less well known), it attracted only an overwhelmingly white, educated, and affluent audience. The conclusion is inescapable: Reich and Glass have lately written what is no more than a pop music for intellectuals, an easy-to-listen-to music shorn of the rage so marked in black-oriented music and the pop culture of the 1960's.

But, as far as serious music itself is concerned, the musical and ideological implications of the rise of this new music seem hardly comforting, save on the principle that any enemy of an enemy is a friend. No matter how much music in general will profit when shorn of the anger and bitterness of the avant-garde, the consequences of these new developments are hardly positive. While the avant-garde has indeed lost, no one has won. Wherever one looks, whether at Crumb's sensuous sounds, or at Rzewski's return to the writing of 19th-century entertainments, or at Glass's employment of an idiom taught at the beginning of first-year harmony, one finds little on which serious musicians can grow. However attractive a return to simplicity may seem in moments of complex failure, recapture of a discarded innocence is as impossible in art as it is in life.

Unless a way can be found to use the past as foundation rather than shelter, the defeat of the avant-garde will have been in vain. And no matter how much the ideological opponents of modernism in general may rejoice to see it replaced by the eternal verities, it is difficult to escape the feeling that the wider culture will be impoverished by the loss of a leading edge, even if that edge has all too often arrayed itself with the forces of social dissolution. What price we shall pay for the end of a two-party system in culture is unclear; it does not seem too much to say that, in being deprived of a force against which it might define itself, conservatism has lost as much as our rejected modernism.

Note

The music of the composers discussed in this article is currently available on records as follows:

George Crumb:
- *Sonata for Solo Violoncello* (1955): Desto 7169
- *Five Pieces for Piano* (1962): Advance 3
- *Night Music I* (1963): CRI 218
- *Four Nocturnes* (1964), *Lux Aeterna* (1971), *Dream Sequence* (1976): Columbia/Odyssey 35201
- *Madrigals, Books I-II* (1965), *III-IV* (1969): Turnabout 34523
- *Echoes I* (1966): CRI 233
- *Echoes II* (1967): Louisville S-711
- *Songs, Drones and Refrains of Death* (1968): Desto 7155
- *Night of the Four Moons* (1969), *Voice of the Whale* (1971): Columbia M 32739
- *Ancient Voices of Children* (1970): Nonesuch 71255
- *Black Angels* (1970): Vox SVBX-5306, Turnabout 34610, Philips 6500881, CRI S-283
- *Makrokosmos I* (1972): Nonesuch 71293
- *Makrokosmos II* (1973): Columbia/Odyssey 34135
- *Music for a Summer Evening* (1974): Nonesuch 71311

Frederic Rzewski:
- *Live Electronic Music Improvised* (with others): Mainstream 5002
- *Les Moutons de Panurge* (1969), *Coming Together* (1972), *Attica* (1972): Opus One 20
- *Variations on "No Place To Go But Around"* (1973): Finnadar 9011
- *Three Songs* (1974): Folkways 33903
- *Variations on "The People United Will Never Be Defeated"* (1975): Vanguard 71248

La Monte Young:
- *Dream House 78'17"* (1973): Shandar (France) 83-510

Terry Riley:
- *In C* (1964): Columbia MS 7178
- *Poppy Nogood and the Phantom Band* (1968), *A Rainbow in Curved Air* (1969): Columbia MS 7315

Steve Reich:
- *Come Out* (1966): Columbia/Odyssey 32 16 0160
- *Four Organs* (1970): Angel S-36059
- *Drumming* (1971), *Music for Mallet Instruments, Voices and Organ* (1973), *Six Pianos* (1973): Deutsche Grammophon 2740 106
- *Music for 18 Musicians* (1976): Warner Records ECM-1-1129

Philip Glass:
- *Strung Out* (1967): CP² Recordings 6
- *Music in Similar Motion* (1969), *Music in Fifths* (1969): Chatham Square 1003
- *Music with Changing Parts* (1972 or before): Chatham Square 1001/2
- *Music in Twelve Parts*, Parts 1 and 2 (1971-74): Virgin Records (England) CA 2010
- *Contrary Motion* and *Two Pages* (both 1974 or before): Shandar (France) 83-515
- *Einstein on the Beach* (1974): Tomato 4-2901
- *North Star* (1977): Virgin Records 34669

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Freak Shows

Jack Richardson

THE protagonists of the two most successful dramas this season on Broadway, *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* and *The Elephant Man,* are a paralytic and a physical monster. To those who follow trends in American entertainment, this should be no surprise. Already many perplexed and agitated articles have been written about the tendency over the past few years of television and the theater to celebrate the problems of mental and physical affliction, and a variety of dark conclusions, social and psychological, have been drawn as to why the crippled, the retarded, the blind, the cancerous, and the freakish have suddenly come to possess an urgent cogency for such a large audience.

Now if a similar taste for the diseased and mutilated were found in the drama of an earlier age, it would simply be dismissed as betraying no more than a straightforward penchant for the grotesque, a callous sense of curiosity, or a superstitious reverence for the aberrant. One can well imagine the manner in which, say, Barbara Tuchman would have treated such a phenomenon had it been part of her benighted 14th century, how her sentences would have shuddered with horror and bafflement as she tried to discover a common humanity between herself and those who foregathered to watch the staged tribulations of the maimed and to enjoy the bitter jokes and homilies of the moribund.

But since we are dealing with a contemporary fashion, most commentators have found more complex and gentler reasons for its success than a widespread and unabashed delight in the macabre. Some perceive these dramas as wholesome earmarks of an age in which all the aspects of life, pleasant and unpleasant, are being resolutely and humanely faced. Others sniff at these works as being no more than the latest thing in radical sentimentality, the last refuge for a civil-rights theater that must find ever more extreme examples of the social outcast in order to keep audiences titillated with guilt and rooting mindlessly for the underdog.

Whatever may be the general cultural reasons for the popularity of these two plays, it must be said that they present situations of anguish and horror far beyond the ken and imagination of the average theater audience. For example, *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, written by Brian Clark, a British television writer, is a quite traditional and unsurprising play. Indeed, were it not for the singular condition of its hero, it would seem little more than a drowsy courtroom melodrama with bad character actors and unlikely moral dilemmas. However, in *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, the courtroom is set around a hospital bed, in which lies a young man named Ken Harrison, the victim of an automobile accident that has left him, from the neck down, paralyzed; and the moral dilemmas revolve around the very purpose of life itself. For Harrison, an extremely intelligent man in his early thirties, a former sculptor and unaffected sensualist, wants to be allowed to die—something that must be granted him by the authorities since his injuries have left him incapable of performing even those few movements necessary to take his own life. The prosecutor in the trial, the hospital's head surgeon, wants to prove Harrison guilty of a premature and irresponsible decision brought on by that depression natural to one whose body has suffered such a severe trauma, and he argues in favor of the general preservation of life and for the ultimate authority of medical experience in delicate, borderline cases. A judge is brought in to decide whether Harrison's petition should be allowed, psychiatrists are called to deliver their opinions of the patient's mental condition, and lawyers are summoned to defend the institutional and individual point of view. In the end, the judge decides, after a brief moment of painful, solitary, downstage thought, that Harrison's request should be granted, that he, after all, is the final authority on whether or not the conditions of his existence are bearable.

There are many reasons why the audience enthusiastically approves this decision. First of all, it is what the hero of the play wants, and Ken Harrison, especially as played by the fine young English actor Tom Conti, is a winsome, entertaining fellow. Indeed Conti, allowed by the script to move little except his eyes and lips, manages to give such a sense of physical life to his character that he turns the simple condition of consciousness into an argument for a worthwhile existence. But since Harrison *says* he wants to die, and argues for his obliteration with contrived bursts of logic and black humor, the audience see no contradiction between enjoying his argument and endorsing it.

Then there is the strained and tendentious way the playwright

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presents the opposing point of view. The doctor who wishes to perpetuate Harrison's existence has little but fatuous arguments to offer, and he seems to be as much concerned with preserving his surgical handiwork as he is his patient's life. Moreover, in a scene in which, against Harrison's will, he injects him with valium and thereby robs him even of the right to think lucidly about himself, our doctor becomes no more than a self-righteous bully, a symbol of the smug medical authority which everyone who has ever been in a hospital delights to see confounded.

Yet it seems to me that the main reason behind the general approval of the play's resolution is that death is never considered to be anything more than an abstract end to consciousness. It has no Hamlet-like imagination to body it forth, to give it spiritual or religious consequence, to make it a palpable and terrifying presence. Indeed, one never knows just what Harrison believes he is embracing in his choice, whether he thinks of death in terms of heaven and hell, *le Grand Peut-être*, or as absolute nullity. The audience is thus allowed to think of death as little more than a happy ending for its hero, a vague something that allows him to outwit the plans of authority and the constrictions of fate.

Still, the real objection to this sort of drama lies not in its point of view but in the singular nature of the situation it is based on. Like the overwhelming majority of those who see *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, I have no vital idea of what it would be like to be faced with the choice Harrison has to make. His is too rare a case to acquire the self-evident, persuasive force of art. One leaves the theater willing to debate the play's conclusion but unwilling to take it seriously to heart.

If *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* presents us with a rare situation, Bernard Pomerance's *The Elephant Man* is about an individual who is without question unique. The play is based on the life of John Merrick, a man so hideously deformed that he became, in the 1880's in England, quite famous. An object of revulsion and awe to the popular mind, he was also a celebrity's celebrity, a curio both of science and of fashionable society. Merrick's early years had been spent on the edges of squalid carnivals and tent shows where he took his place among the more usual run of exploited freaks. Then he came to the attention of Frederick Treves, a surgeon at London Hospital, who rescued him from the horrors of the side show and gave him the shelter and safety of a hospital room, in which he lived for six years until his death.

During this time, a public subscription was raised for his maintenance, and he was studied by science and visited by a variety of eminent Victorians. All who met him were impressed by his intelligence and sensitivity, and it was generally held to be a high mark for humanity that such a sensibility could dwell in a form so monstrous and survive a past so brutal.

What exactly did Merrick look like? I have seen drawings of him, but the configuration of flesh and bone are so grotesque that they would seem beyond the powers of language. However, in his memoirs, Dr. Treves has left us a description of Merrick which is used in part in *The Elephant Man* and which gives a strong idea of his appearance:

> The most striking feature about him was his enormous and misshapen head. From the brow there projected a huge bony mass like a loaf, while from the back of the head hung a bog of spongy, fungus-looking skin, the surface of which was comparable to a brown cauliflower. . . . The circumference of the head was no less than that of the man's waist. From the upper jaw, there projected another mass of bone. It protruded from the mouth like a pink stump, turning the upper lip inside out and making the mouth a mere slobbering aperture. . . . The face was no more capable of expression than a block of gnarled wood.

If one adds to the above the fact that the papillomatous growths which covered and hung from the body gave off a hideous stench, one may understand a little the degree of physical loathsomeness which *The Elephant Man* asks its audience to imagine.

I say imagine because, except for some briefly presented and slightly out-of-focus slides, the audience is not asked to endure for the course of the play a real-life image of Merrick. Instead, while the above description is spoken and the slides are shown, an exceptionally comely young actor named Philip Anglim, naked except for a loose loin cloth, slowly assumes the distorted outline of Merrick's body—he also suffered a twisted posture due to the effects of a broken hip—but does nothing else to depict visually the wild explosions of tumors that made his features more feral than human. When he speaks, it is with a high, pinched, monotonous voice that, while separating inflection from meaning, nevertheless manages to color the utterances of his character with a poignant intelligence. In short, except for an odd tilt of his hips and a hobbled gait, it is safe to say that Anglim presents a portrayal of his character's soul rather than his body.

Reducing the anomalies of the Elephant Man to little more than a limp and a slight speech impediment results in making an aesthetic virtue out of a practical necessity. I have no idea how the person of Merrick could be presented in a way that would permit the actor to perform his role and the audience to endure his presence, and I have nothing against the use of theatrical suggestion. Still, in this case, where the character's physical being is so important, indeed is the very focus of the play's action, one feels that this compromise, while clever enough, lets everyone off a little too easily.

However, this omission of physical detail does not keep one from apprehending the terrible isolation of the play's hero; and, indeed, by presenting us with a sort of *in vacuo* horror, Pomerance in a way reinforces the rather simple theme of his play; namely, that those who knew the Elephant Man saw in him only what they desired or

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could stand to see, using him as a symbol for their consciences, their philosophies, and their fears.

Treves, for example, wishes to obtain for Merrick as normal a life as possible, but this is done as much from his scientist's desire to demythify the mistakes of nature as it is from the recognition of his teratoid patient as a human being. A churchman who tutors Merrick in the dogmas of Christianity finds in his unaffected and direct grasp of religion a faith that he would wish for himself. And an actress, a kind, worldly woman, who comes closest to true friendship with Merrick, nevertheless treats his affliction as if it were a sign of artistic alienation, an accident of the spirit rather than of the flesh. Only when he insists on the needs of that flesh and tells her of his wonder about the female body, does she face the fact that her friend is more than a set of original and sensitive opinions on art and literature.

In the end, no one can understand who and what Merrick really is. He himself can explain his appearance only by an old wives' tale that his mother was knocked down by an elephant shortly before his birth. When he dies, his deathbed scene is aptly horrible and touching. Because of the weight of his head, he had to sleep in a position that kept it upright, usually resting it on his knees which he would draw up close to his chest. In his last scene, he allows his head to ease back tentatively until it drops upon the bed; the pillows are too soft to sustain its bulk and heaviness, and Merrick dies, presumably of a dislocated neck. Was this an accident, the final sad result of his desire to be and do as other people? Or was it a way of letting the strangeness of his body take him out of the world forever? Both history and *The Elephant Man* leave the question unanswered.

The fact that this play holds one's attention has much more to do with the facts of Merrick's life than with their theatrical embellishments. The writing achieves no more than a blurry grandiloquence which comes heavy to the tongue of most of the cast. And of that cast, only Carole Shelley, who plays the actress, seems to belong to the world she is in. As the Elephant Man, Philip Anglim belongs of course not to a world but to his character, and like that character, his performance is open to many interpretations. Some, I'm sure, will find it a masterly piece of work, a triumph of method over means. Others will feel that it's the viewer's imagination that supplies the real details of the depiction of Merrick, and that any actor who could stand in an awkward position for the length of two acts could have, in this role, achieved the same sympathetic response.

The Elephant Man, like *Whose Life Is It Anyway?*, offers one not really the stimulation of art but rather the excitement of an extreme situation. In Merrick and Harrison we have two characters on the outer edges of being, but they have got there not through the imaginative action of the plays they are in, but because they are the random victim of a traffic accident and the butt of a *lusus naturae*. In life these events may well be called tragic; in art, however, they are trivial. They can, of course, give the appearance of specialness to the characters who suffer them, and in the theater appearance can go a long way and should not be belittled. But by themselves they do not earn the right to our highest attention. An Elephant Man and a paralytic seeking death need, just as much as kings or housewives, to be infused with significant life by a dramatic intelligence. In these two plays, that intelligence is rarely present, so that one is left with the feeling that true human horror has been reduced to little more than clever theatrical conceits. Playwrights Clark and Pomerance have depended on awing the audience with these conceits, and they have in general been proven right. The bizarre is always compelling to those who bring bored minds to the theater and who therefore identify the eccentric with the profound. However, there will always be some of us who demand subtler shocks to our system, and who will find in plays like *The Elephant Man* and *Whose Life Is It Anyway?* only a sad sideshow appeal.

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Woody Allen in the Limelight

Richard Grenier

IN 1952 Charlie Chaplin, after a long, historic career as a comic, for the first time signed a new film "Charles Spencer Chaplin." The new film was *Limelight*, the story of a master vaudevillian of mature years, named Cavallo and played by Chaplin, who is loved by a beautiful young Englishwoman, played by Claire Bloom. There was almost nothing funny in the film, the story being unabashedly one of sentiment and love, and not so much of Cavallo being in love as of other people, almost the world, one felt, being in love with Cavallo. In a key scene Cavallo—who has wisely and nobly been telling Claire Bloom, perhaps one-third his age, that he is too old for her—is told in return with overwhelming emotion, the music swelling, "But I love you, Cavallo."

Chaplin was politically *persona non grata* in the United States at the time, but *Limelight* was received in London, Paris, and other European capitals with praise nothing short of dithyrambic. Chaplin having already been compared with Aeschylus and Sophocles (not Aristophanes, mind you), critics now reached desperately for new hyperbole. The opinion was nearly universal, in any event, that Chaplin had at last attained his magnificent maturity. Other majestic works would surely follow. What did follow, of course, were works of such appalling shoddiness (*A King in New York, The Countess from Hong Kong*) that it is an act of charity to pass over them—although it is perhaps worth noting that Marlon Brando, presumably still awed by Chaplin's greatness, lent his services to the latter film.

The chorus of praise that has greeted the appearance of Woody Allen's *Manhattan* is reminiscent of the European reception of *Limelight*. "A Comic Genius" proclaimed the cover of *Time* magazine (subtitle: "Woody Allen Comes of Age"); a cover story on "The Maturing of Woody Allen" in the New York *Times Magazine*; "genius" in the New York *Daily News*; "masterpiece" in the Los Angeles *Times*; "the one truly great American film of the 70's" in the *Village Voice*.

Allen's interviews themselves have set the new frame of reference. Once, he seemed reasonably content to be considered a compulsive funny man, moody, even morbid in private life, but an author of screen farces—farces which contained parodic bits from the high culture (Freud, Kierkegaard, the usual thing), but farces nonetheless. Now, in *Time*, he announced his concern with "the meaning of life." "You have to deny the reality of death to go on every day." He also seemed to be taking his distance from the Jewish ethos which had provided him with his point of view, characterizations, identity, almost his *raison d'être*. Things distinguishing Jews from Gentiles were "largely superficial," he said, and being Jewish never consciously entered his work.

Manhattan is not signed by Allen Stewart Konigsberg (Woody Allen's real name). But the titles are a somber white on black. In fact, the entire film is in black and white—which in the prevailing conditions of the contemporary film market can hardly be seen as other than a gesture of austere ambition, if not arrogant defiance. We also learn from the credits that Zubin Mehta directs the New York Philharmonic, that Bella Abzug is a "Guest of Honor," and that "Mr. Allen's wardrobe is by Ralph Lauren."

The film opens on a long series of "glamor" shots of Manhattan: the fashionable East Side in the UN Plaza-Sutton Place area seen from the East River; the Central Park West skyline seen from Fifth Avenue; the Midtown skyline; the long southward view of Park Avenue under the snow. Over these postcards of luxury New York in 1979 we hear George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*, written in 1923, and sounding it. Still over the images, we hear the voice of Woody Allen, who seems to be making several false starts at writing an autobiographical novel. "Behind his black-rimmed glasses is the coiled sexual power of a jungle cat."

The opening scene proper takes place at Elaine's, an Upper East Side restaurant which has received an immense amount of publicity as a meeting place of prominent writers and intellectuals. We find Isaac (Woody Allen), a highly successful television comedy writer; his best friend, Yale (Michael Murphy), a college literature professor; Yale's wife (Anne Byrne); and Isaac's seventeen-year-old girl friend Tracy (Mariel Hemingway, granddaughter of Ernest). They are conversing, yes, about the nature of art. ("Artists get in touch with their own feelings. . . .") But the talk soon drifts off into funny chat from Isaac about Tracy's youth. "Do you realize I'm dating a girl who still does homework?" And indeed Tracy has to go off to do her homework.

EVEN the greatest stories can be reduced to vapidity in summary (as Woody Allen himself knows, having done it to Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in a skit in his own *Love and*

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Death), and I am perhaps doing an injustice to *Manhattan* by synopsizing it. Nonetheless: Isaac Davis is a talented, witty, fashionably dressed television writer, attractive to women, who is having a low-key affair with Tracy, a schoolgirl with the voice of the mouse in a Tom-and-Jerry cartoon. In a situation reminiscent of *Limelight*, she is hopelessly in love with him, but he discourages her from taking the "relationship" too seriously. "You're going to meet a lot of terrific guys. I know you love my dry humor and astonishing sexual technique, and you'll have fond memories, but you'll look back on me later as a detour on the highway of life."

Meanwhile, his friend Yale has begun an adulterous liaison with a literary intellectual lady named Mary Wilke (Diane Keaton). Described as "nervous, high-strung, elusive," Mary drops more intellectual names per minute than I have ever heard from any human being, in art or in life (Jung, Isak Dinesen, Heinrich Böll, Van Gogh, Fitzgerald, Mahler, Ingmar Bergman, etc.). Yale, torn between his book on Eugene O'Neill and a new Porsche, his wife and his mistress, decides to palm Mary off on Isaac. Isaac has been having a difficult time with his ex-second wife, who has left him for a lesbian and is now bringing up their child "with two mothers," and he picks up with Mary where Yale left off. He also drops Tracy, who is very hurt. Then Yale changes his mind and picks up with Mary again, who drops Isaac.

At this point, Isaac realizes that the one he has really loved all along is Tracy. Unable to reach her on the telephone, he races across New York to find her in the lobby of her luxury apartment building, about to take a plane for London. He reverses himself on everything he has ever told her about being a detour on the highway of life and entreats her to stay. But it is too late: her parents are already in London looking for a place for her to live. The melodies of George Gershwin love songs have been recurring relentlessly throughout the entire film, and, its words unheard, the one that swells up now is: "They're writing songs of love, but not for me." But the effect is softened. The London trip will only be for six months. Perhaps he hasn't lost her after all. "Six months isn't so long," says Tracy, who assures Isaac earnestly in her little voice that she still loves him. "Have a little faith in people," she says appealingly. The last shot in the scene is of Isaac's face, gazing at her shyly, lovingly. A wistful smile comes to his lips. We cut to the Manhattan skyline. The screen goes black, bearing the legend, "Directed by Woody Allen."

THE first thing to say is that *Manhattan* is not a comedy at all, though Woody Allen himself has many funny lines. He is gloomily unoptimistic about the lethal effect of satire on Nazis, for instance: "Satire doesn't work on guys with shiny boots." He thinks people should mate for life "like pigeons or Catholics." When in an argument with Michael Murphy he is told he thinks he's God, he answers, "Well, I've got to model myself on *someone*!"

But no one else in the film has a scrap of wit. Michael Murphy and Mariel Hemingway are both excellent actors, but neither gets a laugh in the entire movie. Diane Keaton does get a few, but as a fool and a butt. There is, on the other hand, no laughter at the expense of Meryl Streep, who plays the lesbian ex-wife with a truly forbidding humorlessness; nor is any fun made of her lesbian lover or their relationship. Indeed, one is tempted to think that Mr. Allen, who has been known to needle sanctimony, now has a list of subjects that he feels it would be particularly unseemly, or perhaps too risky, to use for humorous purposes. Chevy Chase could let fly at Gerald Ford, but Woody Allen will not let fly at Bella Abzug, who appears in *Manhattan* as herself at a black-tie Museum of Modern Art fund-raiser for the ERA and is treated solemnly and even reverentially by the film.

In short, the only character allowed to have any wit at all in *Manhattan* is Woody Allen himself —and his wit is "justified" in the sense that it is his profession to be funny. What we are offered in *Manhattan*, as in *Limelight*, as indeed in the true ancestor-work, Leoncavallo's *I Pagliacci*, is a perfectly serious story about the private life of a professional funny man.

Accordingly, Allen has transformed the nature of the character he assigns himself. Until now his formula has been a comparatively simple one: he was the *nebbish* triumphant, the *nebbish* in excelsis. But not only does Woody Allen not want to do comedy any more, he doesn't want to play a *nebbish* any more either. In line after line after line of *Manhattan*, Isaac Davis gives us to understand that he is personable, assured, witty, muscular, attractive to women. He feels it necessary to assert his self-assurance even when told he is funny. "I don't need you to tell me that, I've been making good money off it." In the scene at the Museum of Modern Art, during a discussion of how best to deal with Nazis, he says maybe "a bunch of the guys" should get together and (here he raises a clenched fist) go over to Jersey and show them. Woody Allen is going to go over and brawl in the streets of Jersey with Nazis.

Similarly, meeting women, as he says, is "no problem." The only woman in the film who does not have powerfully loving or admiring feelings toward Isaac is his lesbian ex-wife, but it hardly reflects on a man's virility or sexual attractiveness if a woman he fails to hold isn't interested in men at all. For the rest, the Diane Keaton character falls under his spell, his friend's wife is utterly devoted to him, and Tracy, the schoolgirl, is hopelessly in love with him.

Intelligent people have found something "authentic" in this Tracy-Isaac relationship. I do not. I think Mariel Hemingway gives an extremely touching performance. Isaac (since after all he is gradually brushing her off) is quiet and unassuming with her—as opposed to the conquistador manner he forces himself to assume in other parts of the film. But Tracy has no distinguishing characteristic whatever other than her love for Isaac. She is a teenager. She is beautiful. She has a little voice. And she loves Isaac.

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She was created for this sole purpose and, more than anything else in a film whose own main purpose seems to be the adoration of Woody Allen, she is its personification.

It is interesting in this context to compare the closing scene of *Manhattan* with the closing scene of Chaplin's *City Lights,* which undoubtedly served as its model. The scene from the Chaplin film is awash with sentimentality also. It is derived from Victorian literature: a good deed found out by accident. The beautiful salesgirl in the flower shop, formerly blind, realizes from the feel of his hands that this ridiculous looking tramp standing before her is the noble stranger who paid for the operation which restored her eyesight. Despite its contrived nature, it is a scene of wild emotion, ranging from embarrassment to shame, horror, anguish. Chaplin fidgets giddily, grimaces. He is pleased but his confusion is excruciating. It is hard to imagine how anyone who has seen Chaplin perform this scene can ever forget it. But Chaplin does not win the girl. There is no possibility that the beautiful salesgirl will walk off into the sunset with the tramp. *The loser must lose.* It is inexorable. The strength of the scene derives from this. What happens at the end of *Manhattan*? Tracy goes off to London for six months, promising to return to Isaac.

Is *Manhattan,* then, nothing more than the story of a group of people in love with and devoted to Woody Allen? Allen certainly thinks it is more. He told an interviewer that in his film he "intended Manhattan to be a metaphor for everything wrong with our culture," and that he believes, *inter alia,* in the "futility of obtaining immortality through art." This, if we take him at his word, is what the picture he gives us of intellectual life in New York is supposed to reveal. But it is a ludicrously distorted picture—a provincial's idea of how intellectuals talk and behave. "I just saw your article on Brecht in the *Atlantic.*" "You know I was always a sucker for Germanic theater." "I loved Ingmar Bergman when I was at Radcliffe, but you grow out of it, you grow out of it." The characters in *Manhattan* go relentlessly to art shows, concerts, seminars on semantics. They review new books on Virginia Woolf. They use words like "allegorical" and "didacticism," expressions like "textual negative capability" and "mired in 30's radicalism" (not to mention "liberal Jewish paranoia"). It has been suggested that the closest approximation to chatter of this sort would have come from the Greenwich Village of the 50's—the same period during which Woody Allen first came to Manhattan—and I think the evidence is rather strong that he has never learned more about the New York intellectual world than what he gleaned there in those days.

Bendel's. Bloomingdale's. Paul Stuart. Gucci. The Carlyle. The Pierre. Zabar's. The Russian Tea Room. Elaine's. Rizzoli. This is the world not of the intellectual or even of "our culture," but of the gossip columnists and *Women's Wear Daily.* In this movie, used as they are, these places do not for one second become a "metaphor" for spiritual emptiness or corruption. If anything, they suggest glamor and a more interesting life than one in which people buy their clothes at Sears, Roebuck. Thus too with the musical score. Gershwin's music dates from the 20's and 30's. *Manhattan* takes place in the 70's. Does the contrast inform the film with any special perspective? Allen, who says he is very much interested in historic change in New York, claims the music stresses "the poignancy of where the city's gone" (its "deterioration"). But since the exteriors of the film consist exclusively of the *hauts lieux* of New York luxury consumerism, the claim seems quite nonsensical. The music is never used as contrast in any case, but supports the film's romantic moments in the most uncritical way possible.

Woody Allen has never been a giant of the American box office. People in New York seem to think that *Annie Hall* was a commercial blockbuster, but it ended up nationwide in twenty-sixth position in 1978, below *The Bad News Bears in Breaking Training,* and well below *Herbie Goes to Monte Carlo.* Still, it is true that all Allen's films have been at least moderately profitable. Surprising as it may seem, in Hollywood today, as in baseball, a man who hits once out of three times at bat is considered a heavy hitter. A batter who gets a clean hit five times out of ten is wondrous indeed. Woody Allen has, unbelievably, hit virtually 1.000. In the month in which I write, moreover, *Manhattan* is leading all other films at ticket windows across the country. Unexpectedly, unprecedentedly Woody Allen is number one.

The core of Allen's support is obviously the affluent neighborhoods of the great American cities. In these neighborhoods Jews are no doubt overrepresented, certainly with respect to their proportion in the general population. But the most significant part of Allen's audience, and the majority in the country at large, is made up of young, well-to-do, non-Jewish liberals, marked (and here I offer my own impression) by a degree, and sometimes a very high degree, of philo-Semitism. Astonishingly, Allen now says that Jewishness is "no part of my artistic consciousness," yet for the liberal Gentiles who pack the theaters to see him, his Jewishness is his most conspicuous feature, he is the Jew *par excellence.*

But Woody Allen and his audience differ on a whole series of things. Allen thinks his artistic consciousness is not Jewish. The audience thinks it is. Allen claims *Manhattan* is about futility and spiritual emptiness. The audience, I believe, knows a pleasing romance when it sees one. Allen says his film is about the decay and deterioration of New York City. The audience, I suspect, believes no such thing; it knows New York is glamorous. Ironically, the success of *Manhattan* may be the result of exactly these differences in interpretation. If Woody Allen had made the movie he claims he made, his audience might not have liked it one bit.

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Books in Review

Against the Center

CONFESSIONS OF A CONSERVATIVE. By GARRY WILLS. *Doubleday. 231 pp. $10.00.*

Reviewed by
WERNER J. DANNHAUSER

GARRY WILLS has written so much of late and received so much approbation that he is on the way to becoming a cultural phenomenon rather than a mere author. A number of reasons help to explain his success. Wills always writes facilely and sometimes felicitously. Then, too, he is an intelligent man, or at least a clever one, capable of springing a surprise. Thus, if the world is divided between those who think Alger Hiss despicably guilty and those who are certain he is admirably innocent, Wills can be counted on to come along and explain him as simultaneously guilty and admirable.

Above all, however, Garry Wills has an almost uncanny sense of timeliness. Is Nixon changing from a problem to a President? Here comes *Nixon Agonistes.* Is the Catholic Church in such turmoil that one is no longer sure where it stands or where it's going? *Bare, Ruined Choirs* enters the scene. Does revisionist history crave a new beginning for our country? Garry Wills sets his mind to *Inventing America.* Finally, does conservatism seem to show signs of reviving? Garry Wills confesses—in the Augustinian sense—to being a conservative.

In all these bursts of energy, Wills reminds one of those whom Nietzsche, in *Human, All-Too Human,* called fifteen minutes ahead of their time, as contrasted with those who are "really great and superior." The former, according to Nietzsche, come into possession of public opinion shortly before it is public and like to "rush into the arms of a view that is worthy of becoming trivial." Wills is a case in point. It is tempting to smile at the pleasure Wills, who once labeled Nixon a "true liberal," now takes in calling himself a conservative—this apologist for Lillian Hellman. The trouble is that writers of this kind are usually sore winners, reacting to success with increased pomposity. That at any rate is what seems to be happening to Garry Wills, who in his new book sets out to trace his progress from an imperfect conservatism to a genuine one and ends by posing as a thinker for all seasons.

Wills was given his first chance to show what he could do by the *National Review,* and the beginning of this book, which takes us "inside" the offices of that journal, constitutes much the best part. Wills skillfully charts the tensions among the intellectuals of the Right—libertarians against authoritarians, etc.—and thereby provides a needed complement to the various memoirs that have appeared detailing such differences among intellectuals of the Left. His portrait of William F. Buckley, Jr. rings true, and his reminiscences of Frank and Elsie Meyer are genuinely moving, being genuinely informed by affection. If anything mars this account of Wills's younger days, it is the author's tendency to patronize his patrons. He does not hesitate to refer to Russell Kirk as a "sap" or to condescend to a man of much greater stature, Willmoore Kendall.

Wills's talent and industriousness soon combined to prepare him for greater prominence at *Esquire,* for which he became a political reporter of the national scene. When he reaches what he calls his "*Esquire* Days," Wills almost completely abandons the autobiographical cast of his story, evidently preferring to be judged by his thought. That is a pity, because his personal memories—especially those of his courtship and marriage—can be charming. One can scarcely say the same of the political observations of the American system that follow.

By the American political system, Wills means almost exclusively the American electoral process, which he finds "meaningless." It inhibits change, favors mediocrity, prevents citizens from deciding issues except perhaps by retrospectively sanctioning or condemning what has been done, and is in general so fraudulent that Wills finds himself unable to blame those who condemn it in deed as well as speech.

The correct parts of this analysis are hardly new; in opting for a representative rather than a participatory democracy, the Founding Fathers recognized that the people were better at choosing men than at deciding issues. Yet this does not mean, as Wills repeatedly insinuates, that issues do not matter. He correctly states that during the 1860 campaign Lincoln refused to discuss "divisive issues," but he neglects to mention that Lincoln's debates with Douglas were on record. The nation knew the issues that were at stake, and this was particularly true of the South; South Carolina seceded before Lincoln took office.

The best that can be said in Wills's defense is that he does not really mean what he says. He may depict the electoral process as a fraud, but he cheerfully contradicts himself by informing the reader that women's suffrage enabled women to show "what they really want" and he blandly acknowledges that all politicians "must defer to voters." Nor does he totally condemn the United States for failing to be self-governing. Indeed, he is quite reconciled to our supposed lack of democracy; to explain how things really work, he ar-

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ticulates what might be called a theory of countervailing elites.

Wills takes it to be self-evident "that *the* elite in America" (emphasis his) is the business community; yet if business were as powerful as Wills makes it out to be, Nelson Rockefeller would surely have become President. The necessary counterbalance to business, in Wills's view, is provided in part by bureaucrats, about whom he says some things that are both amusing and true. He also defends do-gooders like Leonard Bernstein against Tom Wolfe's charge of "radical chic." But Wills reserves his real praise for the "good doers," a category exemplified by, among others, Martin Luther King, whose loving disobedience of the law Wills cannot distinguish from the resentment-ridden shenanigans of the Berrigan brothers. He is also so rhapsodic in his praise of William Lloyd Garrison that he might cause a reader to forget that it was Lincoln who freed the slaves, and this self-described conservative apparently identifies all "good-doing" with the Left; at least he fails to provide a single example of any other kind.

Yet Wills's fondness for everything and everybody on the Left does not entail a complete break with his right-wing past; his perpetual and unchanging dislike of the Center provides him with all the continuity a gifted man needs in his life. Wills seems always to have had difficulty with the conservative virtue of moderation; certainly his view of this country is immoderate, to say the least. He calls the United States a "warfare state" as a matter of course and does not hesitate to depict anti-Communism as hysterical. If he does not deny that the Soviet Union is worse than the United States, neither does he desist from comparing the plight of 20th-century Soviet dissidents with that of 19th-century American critics like Mark Twain. Communism, he asserts, may be bad, but our resolve to resist it is equally bad because firefighters become indistinguishable from the fire they fight. Wills does not explain why, on this reading, we did not emerge from World War II as Nazis.

The tendentiousness of all this is ultimately less surprising than Wills's attempt, toward the end of the book, to lend it coherence by calling it an Augustinian way of looking at things. Wills finds in Augustine the basis for a teaching that urges a "modest politics" on men. His argument here is open to two grave objections. First, it forces him to treat as a mere inconsistency the main thrust of Augustine's thought, especially his opposition to tolerating what is not Christian. Secondly, what Wills chooses to understand as Augustine's "radical break" with classical thought is actually its precise opposite, namely, a holding fast to the insights of classical political philosophy, which insists that there is a realm above and beyond politics.

WHAT Wills seems to be after in his reliance on Augustine is a justi-

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fication for his own wish to look down on all political life. Yet anybody who really understands the limits of politics also understands the scope of politics. Most of the time, as when he mocks our fear of the Soviet threat, Wills is not above our national concerns but beneath them.

The Appeal of Zion

TWO ROTHSCHILDS AND THE LAND OF ISRAEL. By SIMON SCHAMA. *Knopf. 399 pp. $15.95.*

Reviewed by CHAIM RAPHAEL

NOTHING is better for one's peace of mind about Israel than to turn from the current political and military headlines to the passionate dramas of years gone by, when the issues at stake were the acquisition of a few dunams of land, the provision of a well or a gasoline pump, experimenting with a new crop, building a schoolroom. Suddenly, everything is in perspective.

There could hardly be a better illustration of the merits of this approach than that offered by this new study of the role of the great Baron Edmond de Rothschild (1845-1934) in the early development of what has become the state of Israel. Formally, the book embraces also the work of his son James and the institution—the Palestine Jewish Colonial Association (PICA)—into which the Rothschild projects were ultimately absorbed; but "the Baron" is the true focus, not only for the detailed story of what he accomplished at this primitive stage when almost everything trembled on the edge of collapse, but even more for the chance it gives us to see the mysterious appeal of Zion transforming a man's life to his own surprise and even, it might be said, against his will.

This is, indeed, the central paradox in the Baron's work. When the book opens he is unknown, a junior member of the unimaginably rich Rothschild dynasty in Paris, willing enough to participate in his family's formal leadership of the small community of French Jews but totally remote in sentiment from the harried Jewish masses—five or six million in number—in Eastern Europe. By the time the book ends, his work in Palestine has given him unique status among the Jews of the world. On his final visit in 1925 at the age of eighty, his "spiritual testament" is read in his presence in the Great Synagogue of Tel Aviv, "with swarms of Jews pressing against the door and windows." He has become a legend, and is quite conscious that the transmutation is double-edged. "Without me," he had said to Chaim Weizmann in 1914, "the Zionists could have done nothing; without the Zionists, my work would have been dead."

He had started by believing that "the Zionists," in all their forms, were impractical dreamers. The political Zionism that Herzl offered looked to Jewish independence through a massively financed deal with the Turks. The Labor Zionists believed fanatically that the magic ingredient was the brotherhood of work. All this ideology was alien to the Baron. He had entered the field through charity, having been asked in 1882 (through the mediation of the Grand Rabbi of France) to help a few "Lovers of Zion" stranded in Palestine. He agreed on condition that they operate under his direction, and subject to the advice of French agricultural experts. From this tiny base, the help he offered grew into the foundation (or rescue) of settlements all over Palestine, with millions poured out to promote scientific experiment in new crops, supported where necessary by industry, and all run strictly by agents responsible to him in Paris. It was a formula tailor-made for conflict; but at the end of the day it had created an understructure for all future practical progress, and a generation of trained people who would carry the work forward.

IN OUTLINE, the story is familiar enough; but in detail, as presented in this new book drawing on un-

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published archives and family papers, one gets a fresh understanding of the two distinct phases of the story—the experimental struggles to build up a Jewish community engrossed in new types of agriculture from the 1880's to about 1914, and the bold but hard-headed economic programs launched after World War I harnessing international Jewish support in the PICA framework.

But the pleasure in reading the book goes deeper. In the first phase, the detail provided is often hilariously funny, now that one is free to enjoy it as nostalgia. (A good example is the Baron's forlorn conviction that Palestine wine had to match, at any cost, the great *crus* of France. This particular story ended with a sickly wine produced for the *kiddush* markets of Poland.) In the second phase, one sees how the Zionist idea asserted its validity in Jewish hearts hitherto indifferent or hostile, as if attuned in advance to the somber forces due to explode in the world at large.

Nowhere is this clearer than with the Baron himself. His outlook at the beginning had been dominated by a sense of exasperation that the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe refused, somehow, to conform to his ideal of the virtuous, uncomplicated bourgeois peasant-farmer so familiar in France. He had no thought in 1882 of rescuing or transforming Jewry as a whole; but for his own peace of mind as a Jew he wanted to show the world that a few settlers in the Holy Land could be molded under his direction and through French expertise into self-supporting and self-respecting farmers. At no stage did he personally look for an economic return from the millions he poured out; but the Jewish peasants themselves had to feel the financial whip, nursing their way to independence as French peasants did. To this end, he developed a brood of agents who ruled the settlements like minor Rothschilds, brooking no resistance to the orders laid down covering social life as fiercely as they did agricultural or industrial activities.

THERE are many signs throughout the book of how the tone of the Baron's plans became infused, as time went on, with the kind of Jewish ideology that he had originally resisted when deployed by Zionists, most particularly when Herzl himself had come to him in Paris in 1896 to set out his grandiose plans. To take one striking example, he fought vociferously before World War I to make Hebrew the language of instruction at the Haifa Technion, and not simply out of French antipathy to the influence of the German *Hilfsverein*.

If, when he met Weizmann for the first time in 1914, he was still distancing himself technically from "the Zionists," he was already taking a historic view of the meaning of Jewish life. The support he promised Weizmann for the founding of a scientific research institute in Palestine as the first stage toward a university was not motivated solely by practical reasons. A university, he told Weizmann,

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would be "a center of Jewish culture in the best sense of the word." To attract a great scientist like Paul Ehrlich would be of the deepest significance:

> If Ehrlich works in Frankfurt he is of no value to us; he will be eaten up by the Germans. If he were to work in Jerusalem it would be one of the greatest things for Judaism.

The Zionist ideology, which he had seen as fantasy in earlier years, had somehow begun to prove itself in practical terms by its obvious power to liberate untold resources of will and devotion. The millionaire, free to command in any way he chose, had come to recognize that there were issues at stake beyond the scope of an autocratic paternalism. Weizmann, who had entered the legendary presence in awe, conveyed his astonishment in a letter to his wife. The Baron, he wrote, was doing everything for "Jewish national" reasons. He was to be equally astonished later in the same year when James, picking up his father's work, criticized the Zionist program as too timid. The demands they were making to British politicians for encouraging colonization, he told Weizmann, were not enough: "One should ask for something which tends toward the formation of a Jewish state."

It is only against this sort of background that one can understand the spirit in which, when the right moment came, the Baron's son James set out, shortly before his own death in 1957, to hand over to the state of Israel the huge properties and assets of the Rothschild benefactions as enshrined in PICA, accompanied by a gift of 6 million Israeli pounds (a vast sum at the time) for the building of the Knesset.

If the winding-up of PICA this way was generous, it was also realistic. Even by the time of the Baron's death in 1934, the economic balance within Palestine had shifted irrevocably. In 1900, the Rothschild settlements had covered 67 per cent of Jewish land in Palestine; by 1930, the area had nearly tripled but was now only 34 per cent of the total. Even in the first year of the state, the Jewish National Fund budget for settlement was nearly twelve times that of PICA. Within a few years, the Jewish Agency was paying nearly 80 per cent of PICA's new colonization budgets. PICA, as its last general manager put it, had become "a junior partner in its own colonies."

Not that one would move on from this to play down the scale of the Baron's legacy to Israel. Over three-quarters of a century, as the author says in summation, the work had yielded

> fertile farms, gushing wells, plantations, factories, cities—the cornucopia of a living organic Jewish society where once there had been sandy, fetid waste and the timeless confrontation of merchant and *schnorrer*.

Granting this, one is free to assess the work by additional criteria. In day-to-day detail, as the book shows, it was a story of paternalism run riot, with a built-in conflict between a bureaucracy that could seem heartless and a Zionist idealism that could be as irresponsible as it was inspiriting. If the Baron's memory is now sanctified, the authority which he exercised directly or through his agents could be rough and contemptuous. This was often matched on the Zionist side by opportunism and subterfuge. One has to get beyond the detail (so ably marshaled in this book) to acclaim the miracle which always seems to allow the Jewish people to be greater than the sum of its parts.

Seeing Red

ART AND POLITICS IN THE WEIMAR PERIOD, 1917-1933. By JOHN WILLETT. *Pantheon. 272 pp. Illustrated. $17.95.*

Reviewed by HENRY M. PACHTER

JOHN WILLETT, once an editor of the London *Times Literary Supplement*, is a Brecht scholar of whom one has the right to expect

HENRY M. PACHTER *teaches political science at Rutgers. His most recent book is* Modern Germany (*Westview*).

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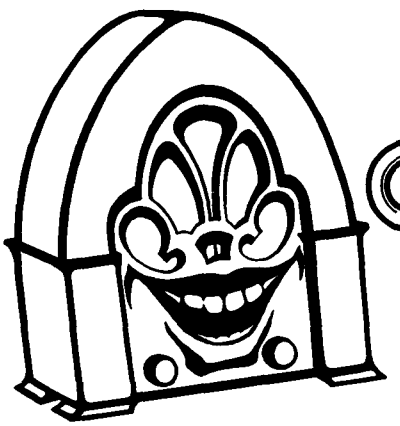

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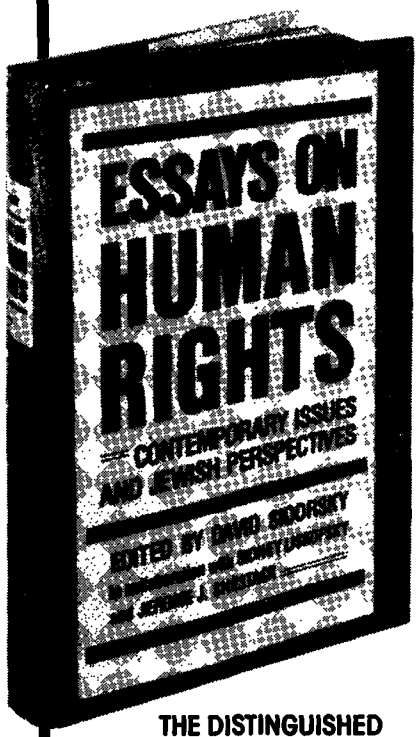
something of interest on the subject of this book—and, indeed, the book has been in general well received by the reviewers. On first leafing through it to look at the pictures, I was delighted to rediscover some old friends from my own days in the German Communist party (KPD), some leaflets and magazines I had helped distribute, some posters and movies I had admired. But I also was amazed to find three views of Lenin, and one each of Stalin, Bukharin, Lunacharsky (the Soviet cultural commissar), Rykov (one-time president of the RSFSR), Radek, and numerous other Russian personalities such as Meyerhold, Stravinsky, Tatlin, Shostakovich, Rodchenko, Mayakovsky; furthermore, Russian posters and stills from films, agit-prop groups, etc.

SOMEWHAT incredulous to find all this in a book on Weimar, I looked once more at the title page and found a subtitle, "The New Sobriety," but still no reference to the Soviet Union. Going back to the pictures, I inspected a little more closely the captions of those that seemed to be legitimate in a book about Weimar culture, and here is what I found: Ernst Glaeser (author of a second-rate anti-war novel who at the time was popular on the Left) photographed, where?—in Kharkov; a still from a film made by the German director Georg Pabst but scripted by whom?—Ilya Ehrenburg; Brecht, photographed in, you guessed it, Moscow, "at the world premiere of his film *Kühle Wampe*"—poor me, I thought I had been at the first showing in Berlin.

Willett's bias appears even in the calendar of events accompanying his text. Lenin's death and Martinet's expulsion from the French Communist party are recorded as landmarks; so are Chiang Kai-shek's break with the Communists, Jaroslav Hasek's joining the Fifth Red Army (though not the appearance of *Schwejk*), and the first issue of the propaganda magazine, *Soviet Russia Illustrated*—no doubt decisive events in the development of Weimar culture! All in all, in Willett's view, the great thing that happened in the 1920's was the absorption in Germany of Russian influence.

For Willett, politics means Communist politics, and indeed we are not spared the factional quarrels in Moscow over *Proletkult*, RAPP (the orthodox arts council), and Socialist Realism, nor the repercussions of this infighting among Hungarian and German Communists. Interesting as all this may be in a history of Communist antics, it is regrettable that we never learn anything on such important questions as: What makes artists and writers align themselves with political movements? What kind of influence did writers exert on the political ideas of their readers? Are there any correspondences between artistic and political styles? Is avant-gardism in the arts necessarily related to progressive politics? And vice versa: Has a revolutionary



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movement any obligation to the arts in general or to any particular movement in the arts? Do party-oriented book guilds and publishing houses influence writers? Willett does not even have the foggiest notion that there are such questions. The principles by which he separates his good guys from his bad guys are utterly opaque. In his simplistic view, "what is missing in the arts . . . is a sense of direction which is political in the widest sense, based on the creative artist's conscious involvement with a new society"—which of course was Russia. On this view, artists who were for the Soviet Union were progressive until the Soviet Union itself betrayed the cause—one does not learn how.

THE truth is otherwise. A number of progressive artists in Weimar Germany did incline to the Left or, more precisely, to some kind of anarchism or radicalism; others, like Ernst Jünger, Gottfried Benn, Emil Nolde, Ernst von Salomon, inclined to the Nazis. Although many considered the Communists their allies in their own fight for freedom, it is not the case, as Willett claims, that the majority of those who were artistically advanced also were sympathizers of the Soviet Union. Russophilia had, rather, been the property of the anti-rationalist Right (the translator of Dostoevsky, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, was also the one who coined the term "Third Reich"); only in the 1930's did it become compulsory for the Left as a gesture of desperation, when the Soviet Union appeared to be the main bulwark of anti-fascism.

The major contribution of the Russians to "Weimar culture" was their films. But these seem to contradict Willett's thesis about the "new sobriety." According to this thesis, which is certainly original, one of the things that attracted the German Left to the Russians was the need of both German and Russian societies in the 1920's to turn to "reconstruction and sobriety" and the need for these "constructivist" tendencies to find expression in a new style, which Willett identifies with Le Corbusier and the Bauhaus. There was, indeed, a low-powered effort in the Weimar establishment, and especially in Social-Democratic Prussia, to find a new style for the Republic—but about this interesting struggle Willett does not breathe a word. Even the name of the Reich Art Custodian—a new office created to promote modern ideas—appears only accidentally, on a list of persons attending the opening of the Bauhaus. Nor does Willett use all available information on the extent of Hugenberg's nefarious film and press empire.

WILLETT tries to derive the Bauhaus from Russian constructivism, but in reality the main idea of the Bauhaus was a straight, though more radical, development of the pre-Weimar *Werkbund* movement, which championed workmanlike, modern design in industrial goods and put German industry in the 1920's far ahead of all competitors. In his text and even more in the illustrations, Willett does emphasize the main achievement of the era—the steadfast advances of city planning and urban renewal under the leadership of Social-Democratic mayors, the state-sponsored innovations in education and in the theater, the movement for modern design in household utensils. But here, too, he underplays conservative architects like Poelzig and Mendelssohn who were part of this movement no less than their leftist colleagues. It certainly would be a mistake to identify modernism in the arts and garden-city developments with political leftism.

Yet in one sense the confusion is understandable, since the reactionaries, who had never been reconciled to the Weimar Republic, branded every new movement in the arts as "bolshevist"; when Hitler came to power, he clung to reactionary ideologies and traditionalist styles even though they visibly clashed with the modernist-technocratic features of his regime. The tragedy of the Weimar Republic was precisely this paradox: that it was never allowed to seem what it was. With an Imperial Marshal for President, to those on the Left it seemed to be more conservative than it was; but its advanced styles

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in the arts, which really were up-to-date "Americanism" and adequate expressions of its bourgeois establishment, appeared to rightists as "cultural bolshevism." On the other hand, avant-gardism had been embraced by left-wing artists and intellectuals who mistook their own liberal-democratic impulses for socialist or Communist. This, however, had been the irony of German politics for more than two generations: that the conservatives were reactionary, the liberals did what the conservatives ought to have done, the Social Democrats tried to do what the liberals had failed to do, and the Communist vanguard propagated social and cultural policies which the Social Democrats had to embrace as their own.

Pluralism

THE CULTURAL PATTERN IN AMERICAN POLITICS. By ROBERT KELLEY. *Knopf. 368 pp. $15.00.*

Reviewed by MURRAY FRIEDMAN

ALTHOUGH one frequently hears it said that this is a time of greater social and political conservatism, with Americans fretting about high taxes, inflation, and rising welfare costs, another way of looking at the current scene is that we have entered an age of pluralism, in which cultural politics has emerged as a force equal to or greater than other factors. In this period, racial, religious, ethnic, and geographical or regional groupings, operating with the perspectives provided by their special historical experiences, interests, values, and styles, are coming to shape our political life in new and surprising ways.

That there has always been a cultural or ethnocultural politics is a truism to many politicians, who have successfully appealed to this factor in building their constituencies, and it has been evident to political scientists as well. Historians, on the other hand, have by and large relegated it to a side issue, concentrating instead on economics and class as the "real" governing forces in American society. It was not until the 1960's that a number of analysts began to look more closely at the role played by religion and ethnicity. "The point about the melting pot . . . is that it did not happen," Nathan Glazer reported in the preface to the 1963 edition of *Beyond the Melting Pot*, written with Daniel P. Moynihan. "The interplay between rational economic interests and other interests or attitudes that stem out of group history make for an incredibly complex political and social situation." By way of documenting this assertion, Glazer and Moynihan used the still fragmentary materials which social historians were beginning to develop, but their focus at this point was on questions of public policy, and little effort was expended on creating a conceptual framework of American life or social organization built on the role of tribal factors.

More recently, Andrew M. Greeley in *Ethnicity in the United States: Preliminary Reconnaissance* (1974) and Glazer and Moynihan in *Ethnicity, Theory and Experience* (1975) have moved explicitly in this latter direction. As Glazer and Moynihan put it, "to see only what is familiar in the ethnicity of our time is to miss the emergence of a new social category as significant for the understanding of the present-day world as that of social class itself." In this new focus on ethnicity they have been joined by a number of American historians who have begun to explore state and local politics as processes heavily influenced by cultural collisions. Following in the footsteps of Lee Benson, whose *Concept of Jacksonian Democracy: New York as a Test Case* was published as early as 1961, a number of scholarly volumes drawn along ethnocultural lines had begun to appear by the late 60's. They included *Forging a Majority: The Formation of the Republican Party in Pittsburgh, 1848-1860* (1969) by Michael F. Holt; *Immigrants and Politics;*

MURRAY FRIEDMAN *is Middle Atlantic States Director of the American Jewish Committee.* New Perspectives on School Integration, *a collection of essays of which he is a co-editor, will be published by Fortress Press in the fall.*

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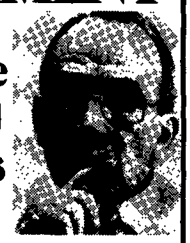

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The Germans of Nebraska, 1880-1900 (1969) by Frederick C. Luebke; *The Birth of Mass Political Parties: Michigan 1827-1861* (1971) by Ronald P. Formisiano; and *A House for All Peoples: Ethnic Politics in Chicago, 1890-1936* (1971) by John M. Allswang. According to these and other monographs, American history has been dominated by a series of battles among Yankees and Southerners, new and old immigrants, Baptists, Catholics, and Episcopalians, etc. The most bitter struggles have taken place over such issues as whether or not the foreign languages spoken by newcomers should be permitted in the public schools, over Sunday Blue Laws, aid to parochial schools, and government bans on drinking.

THE narrow time frame and limited geographic areas explored by most ethnocultural historians have limited their audiences, mainly, to fellow professionals. Now, however, in *The Cultural Pattern of American Politics*, Robert Kelley, a historian at the University of California, has provided a broader historical synthesis filtered through his own considerable insights and imagination. With this book, ethnocultural history has come of age.

Kelley's reading of our history suggests that there is a tribal basis to American life. From the outset of our experience as a people on this continent until today, every aspect of our life has been profoundly shaped by the interaction among the various racial, religious, and ethnic groups living in the various regions and neighborhoods where they have taken root. To these areas, they have brought their special experience, including their historic loyalties and fears, and have developed new styles of experience out of their interaction with the American environment.

"Cultural politics is not a side show that occasionally attracts our attention. . . .," Kelley writes, "it is as pervasive and powerful in shaping public life as is the impact of economic politics." Thus, according to Kelley, to understand American history it is crucial to bear in mind that the country was settled by Protestants of essentially British background, who developed three distinct cultural styles. The New England Puritan-Yankee sought to build a "City on a Hill," a moral order whose code and values would be undergirded by an activist government; out of this grew a "missionary Protestantism" that gave us Sunday Blue Laws, public education, the assault on slavery, modernizing tendencies including industrialization with its excesses, and the self-conscious effort to bring our version of peace and democracy to the whole world. In the Southern colonies, a different, more individualistic culture arose out of the highly dispersed plantation society that was built on a system of slavery and modeled along the lines of the English aristocracy. Finally,

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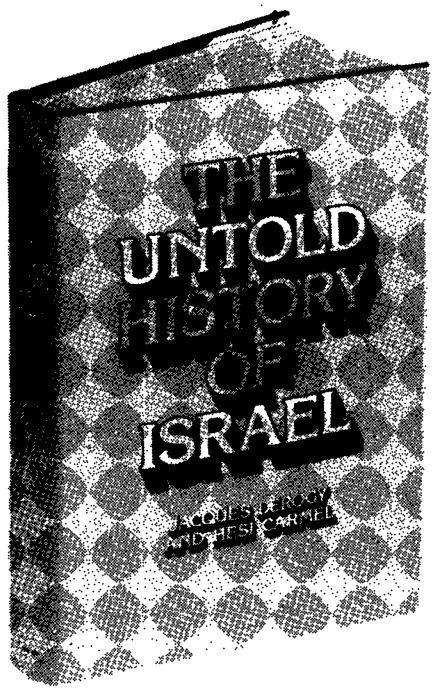

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in the middle colonies like New York and Pennsylvania, society was ethnically and religiously more diverse; moral ideas were wedded to the frank pursuit of the economic main chance, as with the Quakers of whom it was said that they came to do good and stayed to do well.

Our political parties, writes Kelley, have always reflected the regional, religious, and ethnic divisions laid out in the period of nation-building. Americans of British stock have traditionally been attracted to parties like the Federalists, the Whigs, and finally the Republicans, who have been willing to use government power to advance their values, social styles, and economic interests. By contrast, the Jeffersonian Republicans, the Jacksonian Democrats, and later the Democratic party have been home to dissenting groups and minorities including, initially, the Scotch-Irish, Baptists, and Methodists; mid-19th-century immigrants like the Germans and the Irish; turn-of-the-century Italians, Poles, Jews, and Slovaks; and, by 1936, blacks. Into this category, too, fell most Southerners. The live-and-let-live style of the Democrats made room for such maverick components as "the ethnic Southerner" (to use George Tindall's phrase), beer-drinking Germans, and whiskey-drinking Irish—at least until the arrival of large numbers of Catholics, when the aroused tribal animosities of the Baptists, Methodists, and other dissenting denominations within Protestantism forced many into the Republican party.

REGRETTABLY, Kelley brings his story only up to the post-Civil War period. Yet, with the theoretical guide he has offered, it should be possible to trace in broad form the cultural politics of our own day. This may be said to be built on a process of ethnic succession—new and newly emerging groups coming forward as older ones entered a period of decay.

The "decline of the Wasp," for example, coincided with the modern civil-rights and race revolution which began in 1946, when President Truman appointed a committee of blacks and whites to inquire into the condition of civil rights. Its report, "To Secure These Rights," calling for the "elimination of segregation based on race, color, creed, or national origin," was adopted by the Democratic national convention in 1948 and, together with other actions taken by Truman, resulted in the formation of the Dixiecrat party and the exodus of the South from the Democratic party. The political impact of the race revolution is just beginning to be felt. Some of the signs are the incumbency of black mayors in Detroit, Atlanta, Los Angeles, Newark, New Orleans, and 158 other cities; the election of 16 black Congressmen; the defeat of Frank Rizzo in Philadelphia and Michael Bilandic in Chicago recently by huge outpourings of black voters; broadened affirmative-action programs that rely on quotas; and school-busing programs.

WHILE it did not capture the public spotlight as dramatically as the race revolution, the 1960's were marked, also, by a social and economic breakthrough by this country's 48 million Roman Catholics. According to the National Opinion Research Council in Chicago, Irish and Italian-Americans, next to Jews, have become the most economically successful ethnic groups in the United States; by 1970, one out of every three students in college was Catholic. No longer could it be said, as John Kane did in 1955, that Catholics "creep forward rather than stride forward in American society." The values, styles, and class interests of today's "communal Catholic" (as Andrew M. Greeley calls him), have been affecting every facet of American life. This past year, the Pro-Life movement, fueled primarily by Roman Catholics, helped to defeat three U.S. Senators and a number of Congressmen, and has emerged as the fourth political party in New York. Catholics occupy important

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state houses and are mayors in many of those large cities not governed by blacks; their background and the values they continue to hold account in part for such aspects of the national mood as the new emphases on the family, on individual effort, and on economy in government. Catholics have also been in the forefront of the effort to obtain tax credits for parents of children in private and parochial schools.

Catholics appear, too, to have entered into an ecumenical alliance on many fronts with evangelical Protestants, with whom they were once in sharp conflict. These evangelicals, who number somewhere between 50 and 75 million, were locked for many years in social and political isolation; today their values are impinging more directly on American life. Symptomatic of the tacit alliance between evangelicals and Catholics is the fact that a constitutional amendment to reverse the 1973 Supreme Court decision on abortion was initially brought forward by former Senator James Buckley of New York, a Roman Catholic, and Jesse Helms of North Carolina, a deacon and Sunday-school teacher in a Baptist church; the latter has introduced, most recently, an amendment to a bill to prevent the Supreme Court from ruling on voluntary prayer in the public schools.

While evangelical Protestantism embraces, at one end of the spectrum, the anti-homosexual crusades of Anita Bryant (a candidate last year for a vice-presidency in the Southern Baptist Convention) and efforts to restore the Bible and prayer to the public schools, it also includes someone like Billy Graham, who integrated his crusades in 1953, testified on behalf of poverty programs in the 1960's, and has spoken out publicly against anti-Semitism, as well as such groups as Evangelicals for Social Justice and liberal journals like *Sojourners* and *Eternity*. The election of a "born-again" Christian as President was of course the most dramatic illustration of the growing significance of this group.

THE movement of cultural politics to the forefront at home (and abroad) in recent years has caught the "cosmopolitan" society by surprise. Nourished, and to some degree imprisoned, by Marxist and Freudian categories of thought, many analysts once felt that ethnic loyalties would disappear under the impact of modernity. What Kelley and the ethnocultural historians help us to see is that despite the homogenizing forces that surround us, we have always been, and to some degree will no doubt continue to remain, a stubbornly tribal system.

Poison Pen

PUBLIC NUISANCES. By R. EMMETT TYRRELL, JR. *Basic Books. 248 pp. $11.95.*

Reviewed by ELLIOTT ABRAMS

THE late Richard Hofstadter called ours an "Age of Rubbish," and with this view R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr., is entirely in agreement. No idea seems too absurd, no practice too juvenile, no movement too eccentric to attract applause and approval from people who should know better. The most influential sectors of the media, the academy, and the government have demonstrated what Tyrrell calls "a colossal inability to discriminate."

Tyrrell's antidote is not lectures, or indignation, or anger. Rather, he says, "I prescribe ridicule." *Public Nuisances* is a collection of poison-pen sketches of leading public figures—the likes of Kennedy and Carter, Califano and Kissinger, Galbraith and Lillian Hellman—drawn from Tyrrell's regular column in the magazine he edits, the *American Spectator*. The results are entertaining, and often devastating. But the book also displays the limitations of ridicule as a method of exposition and analysis.

Tyrrell is on firm ground in his assertion that much of the "claptrap" which passes for political and cultural thought deserves nothing but derision. One of the book's incidental virtues is that it offers a

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compendium of nonsense from the lips of distinguished intellectuals and public servants. Thus we are reminded that Walter Mondale was moved in 1971 to state that "the sickening truth is that this country is rapidly coming to resemble South Africa . . . the native reserves and Bantustans are the inner city, and our apartheid is all the more disgusting for being insidious and unproclaimed." Similarly, Tyrrell is unkind enough to remember that Richard Poirier, a professor of English, once told us, ". . . sometimes the Beatles are like Monteverdi and sometimes their songs are even better than Schumann's . . . the Beatles exist not merely as a phenomenon of entertainment but as a force of historical consequence."

All this is indeed rubbish; in addition to citing it, Tyrrell understands its significance. What he says of politicians has a wider application:

> One of the most treasured insights of the modern pol is: ideas have no consequences, nor do words. The successful pol chooses words not for their denotation but for their connotation. In modern political discourse words often have only flavor and aroma —no calories and no consequences.

The key is the misuse of language; if there are no standards here, there will be none in the world of ideas. If you will say anything, no matter how foolish, you will believe anything—and indeed people do. All the more need, then, for the remorseless eye of a critic like Tyrrell, whose own respect for the proper use of language does not inhibit him from taking full and exuberant advantage of its resources.

Tyrrell's approach is seen to best advantage in his portrait of Jimmy Carter. He notes that if Carter has been both lucky and successful, "few pols have ever been more banal, more tedious, and more stupendously uninteresting." And Tyrrell has a theory to explain this:

> Perhaps had Jimmy not so recently and thoroughly been de-Kluxed and debumpkinized there might be more to him. He might not be the near vacuum

Cantor Jacob Gottlieb (5th from left) and choir circa 1894.

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who now leaves almost every writer maundering. Yet modernity overwhelmed Plains, and Jimmy has been sanitized. Search the record, you will find not one diverting anecdote, not one piquant quality in this essentially vacant man. He is all go-getter, goody-goody, and speed reading.

Tyrrell puts in evidence the 33-page white paper the White House issued when Hamilton Jordan was accused of spitting amaretto and cream at a young lady in a bar. "This document," he says, "possibly the most important paper of the entire Carter administration, has practically every ingredient of the Carter genius. It is thorough, solemn, shifty, inane, ludicrous."

NOT every portrait in the book is as effective as the one of Carter, but they do exhibit certain common characteristics. First, almost all are attacks on personalities of the Left. Such figures as Orrin Hatch, Arthur Laffer, or Phyllis Schlafly go undiscussed, though each would offer opportunity for Tyrrell to exercise his sense of humor. In part this is simply a reflection of Tyrrell's own political views: it is clear that big-spending, free-wheeling government of the Great Society type is not his preference. But there is more to it; Tyrrell's selection of targets also reflects his sense of the prevailing winds. Though H. L. Mencken, on whom he has modeled himself, more frequently lashed out at the Right than the Left, Tyrrell believes that the contemporary equivalents of Mencken's boobs and philistines have shifted over to the other end of the political spectrum. And some of the statements he quotes lend strong support to that belief.

Secondly, what one notices in this collection beyond political leanings are the limitations of ridicule as a tool of analysis. These portraits are brief, and properly so: Tyrrell fastens on one or two statements or characteristics of his chosen subject much the way a cartoonist concentrates on physical protuberances around which to build a caricature. While the performance is deft, it can also be frustrating: issues are hinted at or lightly touched upon but subjected to no sustained examination. This is perhaps an unfair criticism of Tyrrell, as it would be unfair to complain that a caricaturist has not produced a carefully detailed likeness. Still, one cannot escape the feeling that these delicious canapes are no substitute for a real dinner.

Finally, one notices in this collection an inevitable tendency of ridicule when it is virtually the sole weapon of the writer: sometimes it borders on the scurrilous and the merely vicious. An example is Tyrrell's critique of Theodore H. White in which we are told that White's books on the Presidency are an "atrocity against intelligence" and that "White revises the record because to him the record does not matter." Here Tyrrell is simply allowing his style to overwhelm his judgment.

STILL, although Tyrrell is often rough, he is usually fair, and funny, and he is right to propose ridicule as an appropriate response to solemn incantations that are, quite simply, ridiculous. No respect should be paid to the claptrap that too often passes for political speech today. In reminding us of this, in demonstrating again that language can salvage clear thought, and in making us laugh into the bargain, Tyrrell more than compensates for the limitations of his Menckenesque approach.

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